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THE GOSPEL  
AND  
MODERN SUBSTITUTES





# THE GOSPEL

AND

# MODERN SUBSTITUTES

BY

REV. A. SCOTT MATHESON

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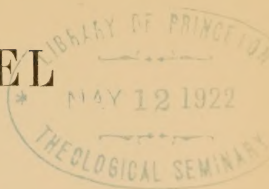
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## PREFACE.

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THE object of the following pages is to bring out the inexhaustible fulness of the Gospel of Christ in relation to Modern Creeds, that contest its supremacy and claim to supersede it. Christianity is at once the most exclusive and the most comprehensive system of thought and belief. In an age of intellectual unrest like the present, the Christian attitude is apt to be boldly aggressive or timidly defensive, and the fault in both cases is a fault of narrowness. To the writer there seems to be a more excellent way of dealing with modern problems—the way of comprehension. All anti-christian solutions of these problems have some elements of truth and life which the Christian Church has failed to apprehend, which, under some of its organised forms, it has tended to neglect or deny. Much of the organised Christianity of to-day, with its rule of thumb, its conventional deadness, and its worship of success, is less worthy than many of the movements which it regards as being opposed to religion. It has inveighed

against the leaders of such movements, without answering them. Men like Comte, Darwin, and Schopenhauer have been martyrs to the narrow dogmatisms and shallow optimisms of their day; like the Founder of Christianity, they have been the "despised and rejected" of Society and Religion. With what results? Their systems of thought have become the Creeds and Gospels of our time. How are they to be met? How shall the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in face of these modern substitutes, prove itself to be the "everlasting Gospel"? It seems to the present writer, that the best method of treating modern systems is not to take up strong negative ground on the one hand, or strong aggressive ground on the other, but to show how Christianity contains the best of all systems. He claims for Christ the best of everything in Science, Positivism, and Socialism, because he believes the fulness of Christ and His Gospel to be infinite. The object aimed at is not a polemic or an apologetic, but an eirenicon. In dealing with such systems, the design is expository and sympathetic, rather than critical and depreciatory, so that the Son of God incarnate, sacrificed for us and risen again, may be revered as all and in all. If we take a sufficiently wide view, we need no other answer to doubt than what Christ gave to the messengers of John the Baptist, and history so well affirms. "Art Thou He that should come?" men are asking; "or shall we find in

Comte, or the teachers of science, or the leaders of social reform, or the students of art, some better guide to truth and freedom, beauty and worship ? ”

The new influence which has been in the world since Christ came to it, may be casting its old leaves only to show us that it is still the tree of life, whose leaves are, with every new spring, for the healing of the nations. In some respects the present may not be the worst time for the Gospel of Christ and the Church of God. Our old Gospel needs to be approached in new fresh ways, because it is of perennial interest to the minds of men, and rival systems are serviceable in eliciting its perpetual novelty and freshness. Our old questions of theology and worship, of polity and service, are finding new expression in the terms of science and art, of equity and righteousness, of brotherhood and love. Any attempt, however inadequate, to show this may be helpful, when conventional belief is shaken on every hand, to make way for enlightened faith ; and with the earnest prayer that this popular, and no doubt most imperfect attempt, may yet be of some service in this direction, the writer sends forth his volume as a contribution in the service of Him who is “worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

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## I.

### *THE GOSPEL AND MODERN SUBSTITUTES.*

THE pressure of the problems of life seems to lie with a heavier weight on men's minds at the present than almost at any other time in the history of thought. There was such a time when Christianity first claimed the suffrages of mankind ; never has there been such a crisis since till these last days. And men seem to be almost as weary of the Christian gospel as they were of the paganism which it superseded. They are willing to abandon the Christian name with philosophic serenity, with a sense of relief, or even with passionate delight. They hail the dawn of a day when the religion of supernaturalism, with its incredible dogmas, and its wearisome prospects of hereafter, shall become a thing of the past. "The era, so called, of grace is near an end," they say, "and the era of science is being ushered in, not with the song of mystic angels, but with the

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heartly welcomes of rational men." And who is to be the divinity of the new era? For all of them still acknowledge that man must have a religion of some kind. What name or names are to succeed those of Christ? Not a few claimants to the vacant throne present themselves, and come to us with large pretensions and promises of great things. It is a misfortune to be put so often on the defensive, that thought is diverted from building up truth into a struggle with rival systems. To vindicate the Christian revelation against assault on every side, to secure its foundations against false theories of science or philosophy, and to show its immense superiority to rival systems, is a duty which we cannot decline, though too much may be made of it. The temptation also is strong to come to terms with the speculative thought of an age, even though the price be sacrifice or adulteration of characteristic Christian ideas. Christianity has always betrayed a near kinship with the best results of human reason; but it has never yet been found practicable to pour her new wine of truth into the bottles of any philosophical system without weakening or wasting it. Its vital force as a factor in human history is so great that some substitute, genuine and worthy enough to replace

it, must be forthcoming ere we can give it up. Nay, it offers an interpretation of religion, life, and destiny so adequate that with Paul it is competent for every Christian to say, "I have that whereof I may glory, through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God." God might have given an answer to the many problems of life in words, but instead of this He has done so in a Person. He has given much to man to know of Himself, and of His will, and the treasures of wisdom hid in Christ are the rarest and most precious. The more these are opened out, the more will it be seen how well adapted they are to the deepest needs of our nature, and how infinitely superior they are to any of the various *isms* that claim to be a new creed and a better religion in our day.

I. *We may glory in the Christian revelation of the existence of God.*

In contrast with those things which pertain to God, as Jesus Christ reveals them, we may note the last utterances of science, and learn how much reason we have for glorying in our Christian gospel.

Professor Huxley once suggested that he should like to revive the worship in which some unknown Athenian had anticipated him when he erected an

altar "to the unknown God;" and this is the origin of the word "Agnostic" or "Agnosticism." It describes a system of thought which claims to be a creed, and it is called the Religion of the Unknowable by Herbert Spencer. Huxley and Spencer repudiate the name of atheist, and believe that it is only the fool who would say, either in his heart or with his lips, "There is no God." The latter tells us that we are "ever in presence of an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed." Agnosticism does not profess to demonstrate that a Creator does not exist, but that we have no grounds for supposing that He does. Whether there be a God or no, it declares bluntly that He has never informed us of the fact. His existence is said to be incapable of verification. He is formless, nameless, unknown, and unknowable. There is an ultimate reality, cause of all things, but whether to say "It" or "He," they know not, but on the whole they prefer the first. Yet they offer this inscrutable mystery to our worship! The religion of the unknowable is only the ghost of religion, and can never rise to a worship, or affect conduct; it must remain barren till the unknowable take shape, and be worshipped through its manifestations. The empty void shall

never have our prayer, for only that which lifts us up and proves more than any unconscious world can we worship. We long

“for a God whose face  
Is humanised to lineaments of love ;  
Not one who, when my hand would clasp his robe,  
Slips as a flash of light from world to world,  
And fades from form to form, then vanishes  
Back to the formless sense within my soul,  
Which evermore pursues and loses him.”

Whom the great lights of science cannot by searching find out, and therefore ignorantly worship, Jesus Christ declares unto us, when He represents Him as our Father in heaven. We are unspeakably indebted to Christ for that revelation of the divine nature. The very idea of God as our Father comes from revelation. We can appeal to the faiths of the world, and say that the Fatherhood of God was unknown till Christ revealed it. And not only is He the highest revelation of the Divine, but He Himself is the highest Divine we can ever know. It pleased God to reveal Himself in Jesus Christ, not merely in a republication of old fragments of truth, but in a disclosure, full and simple, of Himself. Christ manifests Deity at once human and divine, full of majesty and meekness, of strength and love. Thus He affects and wins

us, not only teaching us to say, "Our Father," but drawing our homage to Himself when He says, "Believe in God, believe also in Me : for He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also."

II. *We may glory in the Christian revelation of the worth of man.*

Revelation, culminating in the person of Christ, is the true answer, and in a sense the only answer to agnosticism, and for the same reason it answers another rival system, that of Positivism, or the Religion of Humanity. In Scripture we see how the invisible God has been seeking for and finding the way to the heart of man throughout all the story of the ages. As we read the story of the call of patriarch after patriarch, of priest after priest, and prophet after prophet, the training of the people of Israel and their steady guidance through all sorts of fortunes, till the story finishes with the coming of the perfect Son to seek and save the lost, are we not face to face with the real manifestation of a God of righteousness who comprehends us, however little we comprehend His deeper counsels, who shows us that He has the key to our lives and destinies, though we have not the key to any of His thoughts except what He has been pleased to reveal in Christ? What a

revelation have we of God's precious thoughts to usward ! How great is the sum of them !

Positivism does not present a conception of human worth at all comparable to this. Like the former creed, it recognises nothing as known beyond the sphere of the present life, its facts and experiences. It denies the divine side of man and a divine order in the universe ; it repudiates a higher sphere of existence, and makes humanity its highest word, its supreme being. Humanity, as an organic whole, becomes the object of religious reverence and affection. No other object of worship remains for Comte except this. Man is nature's choicest result and crown, and if he is to worship at all, he must worship the ideal of humanity in its most perfect forms. Such a conception is only a mutilated form of Christianity, in which it ought, therefore, simply to make us glory all the more. Instead of the Father in heaven, humanity is the great parent who has made us what we are ; and instead of one perfect Christ, Lord and Saviour, we have many imperfect christs and saviours of the race. One tries hard to conceive how humanity can ever be the object of worship or provocative of religious affections. While Christ does not present such an object for



supreme regard, yet His revelation of man is grander than what you find anywhere else. He lays bare the unspeakable possibilities of the human spirit as the offspring of the eternal Father, dowered with capacities for finest moral issues, the object of infinite love, and the heir of immortality. No one but God who made man knows what is locked up in him, and Christ who knows what is in man never loses sight of his supreme worth, and seeks his freedom, salvation, and perfection as the one great aim of all His redeeming energies.

III. *We may glory in the Christian revelation of sin and suffering.*

The problem of evil has strained the finest minds, and crushed the tenderest hearts, since the birth of thought. All of us have felt the sadder moods of humanity, the deep despairs that haunt our best hopes, the veil of sadness which clings to the skirts of our brightest joys. Out of such experiences men have elaborated a system of thought, a creed, and named it Pessimism. It is the religion of Buddha, and three hundred millions of Asiatics accept its fatal doctrines. Three of its well-known teachers are the Italian poet Leopardi, Arthur Schopenhauer, and the German philosopher Hart-

mann, all men of morbidly sensitive and sombre temperament. A new form of this Buddhist creed is spreading everywhere in Europe, in England, and even in Scotland. Sir Edwin Arnold's poem, "The Light of Asia," has depicted in fascinating verse to English readers the life and character and teaching of that divine pessimist, Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. The essence of this system makes evil objective, and not an accident in the world ; makes it the groundwork of life, not merely a shadow cast by life's brightness, but the substance out of which it is wrought. Buddha found the root of all misery in desire, and Schopenhauer in the will to live, and both taught that desire and ceaseless striving after the unattained should be crushed to death, and then freedom and rest would come.

"Blessed Nirvana—sinless, stirless rest—  
That change which never changes."

Now, Christ was neither pessimist nor optimist, but stood between the two extremes. He did not teach that existence is an evil, that all effort is pain, and will to live is suffering, and that the only way to bliss is to renounce the will to live, and to reduce conscious being to a minimum by the extirpation of desire. Nor did He deny the

existence of sin and suffering in the world, or seek to get rid of them by starving desire or annihilating will. He searched down to the very core of the disease, and showed its dark fearfulness; He saw evils of every kind around Him, and painted them in sombre hues. Yet His attitude toward them was never one of depression and despair, but always one of cheerfulness and hope. To penitents and sufferers He was wont to say, "Be of good cheer;" and He gave them promise of forgiveness and help, and assured them that sin and suffering, evil that ought not to be, might be vanquished, and would without fail eventually pass away.

Now, it is here Christianity wins, and holds the field, and gives us occasion to glory through Christ in those things which pertain to God. The key to all our problems lies in the Christian conception of man as a sinner and a sufferer, and of what he requires for deliverance from his evil state. It omits nothing in man's need from centre to circumference; it plumbs the aching void just in order to fill it with the riches of grace; it exposes sin in its deep baseness and fearful issues, and meets the disorder of sin completely by its message of redeeming love. "Be of good cheer," Christ says to all who are burdened with manifold woes.

“Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. I have taken away the sin of the world as the Lamb of God. Look unto Me, and be saved: and the burden shall be lifted off your weary shoulders; the darkness shall vanish, and the day of joy dawn.” There may be a trace of Schopenhauer in us all at times, but still more should there be of the power of Christ. Whatever mars and enfeebles the powers of our nature, the vital forces of His redemption can destroy; whatever confines and hinders its immense reserves of unexhausted energy, the mighty operations of His Spirit can evoke and set free. Desire finds scopefulness in affections set on things above; and the will to live, no longer an aching craze, finds in efforts to remove the miseries of the world the simplest, purest, and most blissful consciousness of life.

Let us bring our problems of sin and suffering to the Saviour, let the light of His cross fall upon them, and all will be pardon and hope, joy and peace. Let us open our eyes frankly to all in these problems from which one feels disposed to shrink; let us not evade it, but depict it in the darkest colours, and persuade ourselves that it is not good, but evil. Then let us see the light of redemption shed upon it, and whatever be the

sickness of heart, to the eye of Christian hopefulness, it is certain of final and complete recovery.

IV. *We may glory in the Christian revelation of the uses of life.*

As there is nothing in the gospel of Christ to depress, but everything to exalt the consciousness of life, so it contains an inexhaustible potency for enabling us to grapple with the social problems of life. Socialism is another of the modern creeds that try to supplant Christianity, and many look to it as a panacea for our ills. Its contention against Christians is, that they have been selfish, and reduced religion to a private consolation and a personal advantage, and have been "so busy saving souls as to have no time for saving men or women," and helping to improve their social condition. We need to distinguish between the Christian religion and the religion of Christ—between a conventional Christianity and the Christianity of Christ. Socialism has a keen perception of the existing inequalities of man's lot. Misery everywhere compels its attention. The shameful disproportion in the means of living between the highest and the lowest conditions of men, the depraving and destructive fierceness of competition, the whole width and depth of the life of man, with its bewildering

confusions and helpless misery, give to social questions at present increasing urgency, which is aggravated by serious misgiving as to the availability of methods and energies for redemption from all those ills. Socialism exhibits the peculiar temper of the age, and the particular direction of current energies. Never before has there been so wide and keen a sense of the unity of life, of social dependence, of the obligation to determine our mutual relations by duties rather than by rights. Never has the call to labour, love, and sacrifice been so loud and general. And never has the failure of material remedies for distress made the fact of social problems being spiritual at heart, so obvious, nor the want of an active spiritual dynamic so urgent.

It is in heart-forces and working forces that socialism fails to cure the wrongs of the time, and bind class to class in a common aim for the good of the commonwealth. But who is sufficient for these things? No wonder if those who stand without, in sad or bitter alienation from us, say, "Show us your works." Can we accept the challenge in a worthy spirit? We may glory in being able to show, in a way that men can see, what the social gospel is, and how the gospel of the kingdom of God can, in its breadth and simplicity, interpret



every want, and sustain every effort of men. There is but One who can heal our social distresses, even He who was welcomed with the song, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and goodwill to men," who now sits throned in the heavens, and patiently works with the angels to fulfil that song. Social redemption is in Him. Power, method, impulse, dwell there in Godlike fulness. After the experience of centuries, it still abides true that "in none other is there salvation." Read His spirit, acts, words, and achievements, at the first, to know what He still is and does. His ministry exhibits a breadth and depth of social sympathy, and a fulness of healing energies for life's manifold ills, quite unique. He went about doing good, lifting burdens off the weak, soothing the sad, and reconstructing shattered lives. Misery drew to Him as flowers to the sun. Wherever you see Him, you can tell the poor and needy are not far off. Where shall we go for motive power but to Him who has so commended His love to us? At His cross we see the sources of the fine passion that constrains us to live not unto ourselves, but seek to serve our fellowmen in labours of love. Therefore we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto social



salvation. In all the social crises of life as well as for individual good, we preach Christ and Him crucified, as the chief working force in human redemption, the creative energy of that love which saves at once the soul and the world.

We must come to Christ, and gain the prize of learning love. The perfection of man is a love of use—life used in the service of man. The highest we can *be* is reached when we *do* our utmost for those in sorest need. “He that would be greatest among you, let him be your servant.” Let us hold all we are and have as stewards of God, for the service of man. All hands to the work, then, is the urgent cry. For we share God’s gifts on condition of fullest use for others, and we help in the best life of the ages just as we fulfil that condition.

V. *We may glory in the Christian revelation of death and hereafter.*

What does materialism tell us about death and that which lies beyond? It teaches that matter and force are everything, and that there is no unseen universe—no world beyond this world of appearances. Mind, soul, spirit, or whatever else you may call it, is only a manifestation of matter. Death, at last, clutches the fluttering life, and extinguishes it for ever. Death is the be-all and

the end-all. We go to materialism, and ask for light, but behold darkness,—for life, but behold death, and naught beyond the grave. It tells us that life is no better than a spark blown from an anvil, kindling for a moment, and then vanishing away. Just as the individual emerged out of lifeless matter yesterday, so will it sink into lifeless matter to-morrow.

Is that a creed to glory in? Is it a worthy conception of life? Does it truly interpret and answer the solemn beatings of our hearts? I trow not. There are primal instincts that belie and contradict it: there are intuitions and presentiments that put us face to face with hereafter. They point with persistent finger to the solemn future, and tell us that the consequences of our actions follow us most certainly across the grave. All other creatures go down happily and unconsciously to their fate. Man alone feels the last act to be tragedy: alone he must die, pass into the Great Presence, and then know what comes after. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment." Christ gives a far grander and truer idea of human destination. That view of His which gives the highest view of the soul of man, and the largest view of the universe, is surely

the worthiest, and will prove itself the conquering power. He has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." The true universe is mind, spirit, that which in God originated, and still in man interprets, all things. The view that takes in spirit as well as matter is greater by many infinities than materialism, for it gives an infinite in every soul, and thus becomes the measure of its future existence. "How much," Christ says, "is a man better than a sheep?" And again, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The materialistic theory as to human destiny cannot assure us that there is no human being so insignificant as not to be of infinite worth in the eyes of Him who created the heavens, or so feeble that his action may not have immeasurable consequences long after this material system shall have crumbled into nothingness.

It is no rival to Christianity, nor worthy of a single boast. Therefore, let us glory in Christ's great revelation of immortality, and take the consolation it offers to the sad, of forgiveness to the sinful, of hope to the bereaved, and of rest to the weary. Let the evidence of its fitness to meet the emergencies of experience gather till it crown the struggle of earth with the victory of heaven. Let

us cultivate the inspiration of this hope on our way to the city of God, and do so till we reflect, on the verge of the grave, the unclouded brightness of heaven. Let us keep in view the moral purpose of life, till one supreme determination helps each one of us to say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

## II.

### *THE GOSPEL AND AGNOSTICISM.*

THE saying of Comte is often quoted by his disciples as a profound epigram, that "the atheist is the most irrational of all theologians." We do not see anything particularly profound or epigrammatic in the remark ; for whatever truth there be in it has been much more tersely expressed by an old Psalmist, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Atheism is felt by all men who think to be wanting in reason, and we are thankful to find so great a philosopher as Comte saying so ; but the Psalmist goes deeper than he in tracing atheism to its true source—an evil heart of unbelief. Whenever reason awakes to serious reflection on the subject, most men cannot persuade themselves to believe that the reason they have and the universe which it is set to study can be the product of chance, dead matter, or blind force. The belief of the atheist seems to all men but

himself to demand more credulity than any belief of myth or legend that has been palmed on mankind. It is not atheism with which our gospel is face to face in the present day, but another negative which may, indeed, take a man perilously near the edge of atheism, or lead him deep into the shrine of reverence and true worship. It is not atheism but agnosticism which claims to hold in the future the place which Christianity has held in the past. The real question is not, as under atheism, "Is there a God?" That does not state the question fairly, and suggests a doubt not less painful to the heart than insulting to reason. The real question, as under agnosticism, is this, "Can we know God?" The scientific spirit of our age, in a large, and, it may be said, growing measure, gives to that question a negative reply. We may trace the natural history of the agnostic position in the life of Charles Darwin. From being at one time orthodox in religion he passed through theism to agnosticism. When he wrote the *Origin of Species*, he taught the belief in a Creator. He admits "the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of

blind chance or necessity." "While thus reflecting," he says, "I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind." Gradually, however, this conviction became weakened, and at last he wrote, "The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an agnostic." He turned away from the contemplation of those great questions connected with the why and whither of existence, and religion had no more place in his life. His mental attitude was somewhat stoical. There is the "Don't know" agnostic, and the "Don't know and don't care" agnostic besides, and Darwin's position partook somewhat of both. In taking it up, he did not show any feeling of sorrowful despair. Without any philosophical basis for his position he drifted into pure indifference, and religion fared with him as did the higher æsthetic tastes. About the age of thirty he lost all pleasure in art, music, and poetry. Shakespeare was "so intolerably dull that it nauseated" him. "My mind," he says, "seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts; but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the



higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive." The organ of religion seems likewise to have perished by atrophy ; it was not cultivated, it gave him no concern.

His distinguished pupil, Professor Huxley, says : " Agnosticism is of the essence of science, whether ancient or modern. It simply means that a man shall not say he knows or believes that which he has no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe. . . . Agnosticism says that we know nothing of what may be beyond phenomena." And Herbert Spencer says : " The power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." Such are the utterances of foremost leaders of science in our day. Much of their popular fame is due to the bearing which their opinions have upon those subjects which transcend the natural and belong to the unseen. There is no originality in their speculations, for they are as old as Lucretius and Epicurus. It is the opinion of many that all currents of thought tend to the conclusion that the origin of all things is beyond our reach ; that an infinite reality exists in the world of phenomena, but cannot be understood by us ; that there may be a God, but we cannot know Him. If students of science tell us that the

idea of a Creator fades away before a patient, disinterested study of the universe, let us remember that their loss of faith does not destroy the truth which they give up. "The truths which Christian convictions inadequately approach remain as the ground and basis of all life, whether they are recognised or not." This age deals in negatives, and its greatest negation is the Religion of the Unknowable; but even in so negative an age, it does not need a vigorous intellect to perceive that men of science are only playing with "the ghost of religion." Belief in the unknowable is too vague to become a religion, to give rise to a worship, to afford a basis for conduct. The agnostic position can never be ultimate and final. It is impossible to find a middle way in this great controversy, or to preserve a dignified attitude of mental suspense. Real intellectual earnestness must always regard such a negative position as unstable and weak, and it will either push men into the folly of atheism or give new force to the belief in a Creator, which, as Darwin even acknowledges, "is natural to all."

Meanwhile the attitude of unbelief towards all that lies beyond the sphere of the present life is one of professed ignorance. Whatever aims to

define for us the unseen world is represented as pure conjecture, wholly incapable of verification, and is therefore to be rejected or ignored. Words of ridicule are poured on a religion that holds by the old ideas of a personal God, and the soul as distinct from the body. Opposition takes many forms ; some leave religion aside altogether, while others become aggressive and propagandist, turning their negation into a new religion, and offering it as a substitute for Christianity. We read in the *Agnostic Annual* for 1890, the seventh year of publication, an article on the Comfort of Agnosticism, and the sum of the comfort is found in a denial of the eternal hell, and in leaving the undiscovered future to take care of itself.

Now, the problem whether we can know God is the one great question which towers above all others, and the one on an answer to which depend some of the gravest issues. The proof of His being and knowableness is undoubtedly somewhat difficult to state. It is easy to deny, and scepticism is safe so long as it does that. To fight with denial is like fighting with the air. It is not so easy to affirm, and give proof. He who denies may find many a defect in the proof offered, and fortify himself in his unbelief by such a discovery.

We deal with a vital and practical, rather than with a logical and metaphysical question, and for an answer to it we must rely on the primitive intuitions and experiences of the human soul itself. What has been the witness of these to man's most permanent self in every age, and in what way has it been given? It has been clear and forcible, and often overwhelming and irresistible, in streams of the heart, rather than of the intellect—in direct senses of God and immediate manifestations of Himself to the soul. The being of God, without any demonstration of intellect, spontaneously arises as a truth in the human spirit in its best moods. The greatest thinkers of our race,—Plato, Kant, Berkeley, Descartes, Fichté, Pascal, and others,—who have agreed in recognising the personal self-consciousness of man, also agree that three realities may be affirmed as primitive, fundamental, and necessary conditions of thought. The reality of things outside of us is as certain as the reality of our own existence; and in this consciousness of self is involved not only the consciousness of a world outside of us, but equally the consciousness of an absolute Being. Poets of the first order, like Wordsworth, recognise these high instincts as primal convictions of the human spirit.

Browning sums up his faith in these three things : " I trust in nature ; I trust in the soul ; I trust in God. Or, in other words, we have a sense-consciousness, a self-consciousness, and a God-consciousness." Such are the innate convictions of men's souls, which may be increased in force and clearness by following on to know them, or may be overcast by neglecting or opposing them. So intuitive and axiomatic is the sense of God that every reverent mind will say at once, " I know what God is, if you do not ask me ;" though when asked, the demonstration may not be so easily produced. There is great force in what Mansel urges : " Those who lay exclusive stress on the proof of the existence of God from the marks of design in the world, or from the necessity of supposing a first cause for all phenomena, overlook the fact that man learns to pray before he learns to reason ; that he feels within him the consciousness of a Supreme Being and the instinct of worship, before he can argue from effects to causes, or estimate the traces of wisdom and benevolence scattered throughout creation." By the whole make and constitution of his nature, man has been framed for religion, and so the immediate knowledge of God is as real as the immediate knowledge of his own existence.

Even rationalism asserts the primal revelation of God within the soul, and the *à priori* or ontological proofs of His being and character derive their chief value from this intuition. It is only as a spark of divinity glows as the life of our life, that we can rationally believe in an intelligent creator and moral governor of the universe. Many are satisfied with this God-consciousness alone, neither caring to prove it nor relying much on any proofs that have been long drawn out; and of them it may be said, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

But it is an obvious difficulty against the whole principle of intuition, that one man will deny that he has any such perception of a truth alleged by another to be intuitive, and the empirical school of thought in our day takes up this negative attitude. Such a difficulty may be met on two lines. First, what do the human faculties testify? Certain intuitions are universally confessed, such as those of memory, personal identity, and causation, and they imply the existence of a supreme power with corresponding attributes. Nothing shows the unreality and impotence of the opposite view so well as the fact that, after exorcising the divine personality behind nature, it is compelled, by the

logic of its own method, to exorcise also the human, and reduce it to an automaton. Next, what is the evidence of facts? That faith in God is a real power in the world, by which the lives and characters of multitudes of men and women have been, and are being continually moulded, and that such men and women have been, and are, the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Arguments, however, not a few, can be adduced to answer the latest form of unbelief with regard to the being and character of God. It admits that there is an absolute force, a principle of life, an infinite and eternal energy, from which all things proceed; but it denies that we have any knowledge of this force in its essence, or any right to clothe it with attributes of personality and intelligence. There exists, as it allows, a great reality of which all phenomena, as presented in consciousness, are the knowable manifestations; but that reality is shrouded in impenetrable mystery, and must be regarded as the unknown and unknowable. To say that we can have any real or immediate knowledge here, is to proceed on the maxim of the sophist Protagoras, that "man is the measure of all things." Hitherto mind has found the archetype of itself and explanation of the universe in



an intelligent and moral Author, of absolute power, wisdom, and goodness ; but the agnostic holds this to be a pure creation of the mind, a deity of our own making, and contends against it on the ground that there is a great gulf fixed between the absolute reality of things and our consciousness of them. On this view, it is vain for man to inquire into the ultimate basis of existence as a worthy object of trust and affection, or attempt to find a support for his life in the faiths and hopes of religion. The question is plainly as to the reality of human knowledge. Is consciousness a trustworthy reporter ? Is the reality of things for ever beyond the reach of our finite minds ? Are we confined to the knowledge of phenomena, and unable to rise to the knowledge of things in themselves ? A school of thinking has given prominence to these questions, and they have issued in conclusions which earlier teachers were not able to forecast. Sir William Hamilton's *Philosophy of Nescience*, and Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, have unwittingly contributed to the establishment of the present agnostic position. They were meant to shut man up to faith, but they have been wrested by the men of science to fortify the latest form of unbelief—that of agnosticism. Recognising the limits of our

intelligence, it admits something beyond those limits—something that, while we know it to be, we cannot know what it is. It is thinkable, but not knowable. The finite, it is urged, cannot know the infinite, and it is absurd for the finite mind to transfer its own laws to the nature and action of the infinite. We can conceive nothing higher than mind, but mind may not be the highest thing in the order of existence. There may be gradations indefinitely of being above mind, as mind is above matter. Now, this argument, advanced by agnosticism, is a two-edged weapon, and proves suicidal. For if the agnostic gets behind this doctrine of relative knowledge, and from thence assails our idea of God, his own view of things cannot escape the universal destruction. To speak of the unknowable as force, is to be far advanced in the human form of representing the unknowable; and if it is audacious for the Christian to regard the infinite power under the terms of mind, it is equally audacious to do so under the terms of matter. And if it be said that the former view drags the ultimate reality down to our level, the latter drags it down beneath our level. What can be more becoming than to conceive of it by what is highest in the order of existence? It cannot be less though including

infinitely more, which may be unknown and unknowable ; but as the infinite power is manifested to us through phenomena, we are compelled, by the structure of our being, to interpret those phenomena as manifestations of mind. And the immense wealth of mind is the one fact above all observable in man and the universe.

The only question is, how much more human the representation is than it needs to be. Man must conceive of God through some medium, and there are only two media through which man can think of Him—the medium of nature, and the medium of man's own spirit. The necessity of reading the unseen through its manifestations is recognised by Herbert Spencer, when he says : “Very likely there will ever remain a need to give shape to that indefinite sense of an ultimate existence, which forms the basis of our intelligence. We shall always be under the necessity of contemplating it as some mode of being, that is, of representing it to ourselves in some form of thought, however vague.” His representation of the reality behind all phenomena, while as arbitrary and human as that which he rejects, is at the same time so vague and dreary as to be like a boundless sandy desert, almost without contents for thought, with none for

the heart, and therefore incapable of inspiring any true religious affection or awe. Worship of the unknowable can never be a substitute for that gospel which supplanted it eighteen hundred years ago, when Paul said to the men of Athens, "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." Why must we own an inscrutable power, and nothing else, working darkly forward through all forms of being, and why must the last word of philosophy and religion be the "Unknowable"? It is the savage in his native woods, listening to the thunder, who trembles before a mighty power which he does not understand, but it is the Hebrew prophet or Grecian sage who clothes the mystery of power with personality, intelligence, and life. Such a view may be depreciated as anthropomorphic, but it illuminates nature not less than it crowns man. It is strange that the other view should be thought more dignified, when this one implies the truth that the mind of man has been made in the image of Him who created all things. It is evident, then, that God is knowable. We may know not only that He is, but also what He is. His means of making Himself known to His intelligent creatures must be as boundless as His presence and power. Of

course, all human knowledge is partial; nevertheless, in regard to God, it may be more real, more precise, or more necessary for the conduct of life than that which we have of each other's minds.

The personality of God is keenly assailed by agnostics on the ground that it implies limitation, and cannot therefore be ascribed to absolute and infinite being; but there is no cogency in the objection when the essential elements of personality are considered. These are self-consciousness and self-determination, and they may belong to one who is absolute and infinite, no less than to one who is relative and finite. It is by consciousness and will that man breaks through the narrow limits of relative existence, expands into the infinite, and gains an apprehension of it. But divine personality must not be treated as, in all respects, identical with human personality, else we may fall into serious error. True it is that "the citadel of theism is in the consciousness of our own personality: within ourselves God reveals Himself more directly than through any other channel."<sup>1</sup> And for this reason unbelief tries to invalidate man's personality, the existence of which is a fact, beyond all others, most certain. But though God

<sup>1</sup> *The Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*; G. P. Fisher, D.D.

cannot be regarded as less than personal, and His personality includes the essential elements of our own, yet it must be of a higher and more intense kind, and it is absolute in a way that transcends man's comprehension.

God is knowable, therefore, and many lines of proof help us to enlarge our knowledge of His existence and character. A few of these may now be pointed out.

*The principle of Causality compels us to the recognition of an Omnipotent Being.*

We are so constituted as to ask the why of things, to seek after causes, and rise to a first cause. It is true that Hume and his followers have tried to empty this principle of its element of efficiency; but in spite of all speculation, the mind recognises causation as distinct from mere precedence in order of time, and holds to it as an intuition. From childhood we are on the outlook for causes. Hence the numberless "whys" of the young as the mind opens to the mystery and marvel of the surrounding world. Why does a stone fall to the ground? Why does a kite fly? What makes the sun rise in the east and set in the west? What makes the beautiful rainbow? Such questions spring up in obedience to the law of the



mind, that every event must have a cause. In all its higher developments the mind never throws off this law. To its working we owe the wonderful progress of modern science. The aim of philosophy is a search into the causes of things, in which it shows an inability to pause till it has reached some absolute first cause. Every phenomenon calls for an explanation; every event demands a cause. The two ideas of succession and causation are quite distinct, and it is the latter which the mind asks for as an explanation of all things. Now, the universe had a beginning. Science tends more and more to this conclusion, showing through many stages that what was once thought to be substantial and permanent has proved to be contingent and temporal. But may there not be a permanent element in the material universe, as Stuart Mill argues; and why may not this material universe be the necessarily self-existent Being? Our consciousness of causal power refuses to see in matter alone the beginning—the cause and essence of all things. Matter is so manipulated, and so embraced within the law of cause and effect, that we are compelled to recognise a prior and higher cause. The doctrine of regress carries the mind back to such an origin. All chains of causes must lead up to single absolute



cause. The argument that in these chains each part is caused by that which precedes it, and that in tracing an eternal series it would be absurd to ask for a first cause, is neither profound nor cogent; for if each link of the chain of possible causes hangs on another, it is plain that the whole could hang only if there was a hook for it.<sup>1</sup> And no hook will do but an all-originating will. Let us put the test to ourselves. *We are*, and know that once we were not. There was once a time when neither we nor any living creature existed, or could exist on our globe. How came we to be? We know ourselves to be an effect of some power, and the power cannot be less than man, but immeasurably greater. Is the first cause of the materialist—be it matter or motion—conceivably adequate to produce such an effect? It cannot account for the fact of conscious personal existence. Our inner consciousness tells us that we are other than, and more than the material organism to which our life is, for the time, inexplicably bound. And so when we endeavour to account for the whole physical universe, with its properties and forces, the existence of that universe involves the pre-existence of thought and will. It is the witness of consciousness that all chains of

<sup>1</sup> Hutchison Stirling.

causes lead up to mind as the true cause, and therefore lead up to a personal God as the First Cause. We cannot waive the inquiry; the why of the whole universe is an exercise of thought which we cannot evade, and mind in man is compelled to rise to a Mind able to conceive the whole, whose thought is as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth.

“Nature is but a name for an effect whose cause is God.”

*The argument of Design compels us to the recognition of an Intelligent Author of the Universe.*

In the order and adaptation of means to ends displayed throughout nature, the proof for God's existence is one which impresses philosopher and peasant alike. The conviction of design rises up spontaneously in the mind from an observation of the fair and orderly universe. Of course, attempts have been made to break the force of this argument. From Democritus down to the last agnostic, there have been men who sought to explain it away, and its validity has been keenly contested in modern times. Hume has tried to overthrow it. He contrasts the omnipotence of God on one side, and the impotence of man on the other, and

asks if there can be any analogy between them. He argues that it is the grossest partiality to make ourselves the models of the universe. But the answer to such an objection is obvious. In arguing from design, we simply use the reason which is our power and our very selves, and in the exercise of which we have all history and science to confirm our trust. Hume's sceptical objections did not, however, amount to much when he wrote, in the *Natural History of Religion*, such words as these: "The whole frame of nature depicts an intelligent author, one single being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts according to one regular plan or connected system." "No one," he said, as he walked home one fine evening with a friend, "can look up to that sky, without feeling that it must have been put in order by an intelligent being." J. S. Mill advises those who would establish the argument for God to stick to proofs of design; he could not set aside the marvellous structure of the eye. It has been by following the lamp of final causes, and obeying her beckoning hand, that the masters of anatomy, from Galen to Owen, have been guided in their brilliant discoveries; it has carried conviction, from the time of Socrates to

that of Faraday, to the foremost minds of the human race, and found almost its sole antagonists among spinners of speculative cobwebs. The prints of divine forethought, and the convictions they produce, have been ploughed into the very subsoil of the human mind. It has been the fashion for men of science to call this argument old-fashioned, to pooh-pooh it, and try to sneer it out of court; but they cannot succeed. It always comes back, often enriched with the spoil which they afford. So manifold are the adjustments and harmonies of the visible creation, so often do the beautiful adaptations of nature strike the greatest observers, that such words as "scope," "purpose," and "cosmical order," are as frequently used by adversaries as by advocates of the design argument. Darwin uses such language perpetually, and to an extent far exceeding any other natural philosopher, and for the simple reason that he cannot help it. His works in this way become as valuable as Paley's Evidences, for the illustrations they give of design and benignant contrivance in nature. Here is the climax of proof in confirmation of the great argument of natural theology. It is the all-pervading idea of the universe. One may as well try to expel the atmosphere, as try to expel this

idea. We cannot get rid of it : like Him of whom it testifies, it is everywhere.

We are not insensible to the objection raised against the design argument, that it represents the genesis of the heavens and the earth, as effected after the fashion of a workman shaping a piece of furniture, and that it regards the First Cause as a mechanist, elaborating his contrivances after a human model, and withdrawing to see how they go. Such a view of God, while attributing skill to Him, would be very inadequate, and indeed unworthy. The modern school continually write as if design and plan in nature were of the same tentative and irregular character as the operations of human genius. It is the mere human mechanist they think of, and of God as being reduced to that conception alone. But no sensible theist does so. When he uses the idea of design, he means only that the works of God and the works of man are products of intelligence, showing mind and order, and not blind chance. There is no call upon us to defend the imperfect analogies, by which some advocates of this argument may have pictured to themselves the works of nature. We cannot conceive too grandly of nature, and the harmony and continuity of its movements. The very magnifi-

cence of its order is only a further illustration of divine wisdom.

Objectors to the design argument urge that defects may be found alike in the organic and the inorganic world, and so they infer that our world cannot be the work of a divine intelligence. Like King Alfonso of Castille, had they been present in the counsels of the Almighty when things were made, they could have suggested a better and more orderly arrangement of things. And, without doubt, there are facts in nature somewhat difficult to explain. A class of facts seems to show an imperfection in the adaptation of a given plant or animal, to the circumstances in which it is placed. Helmholtz says that the eye is not a perfect optical instrument, but has all the defects of such an instrument, and even some which are peculiar to itself. Then think of the terrible facts of nature : the beasts and birds of prey, with their awfully beautiful contrivances to inflict pain and death ; the selfish eagerness with which each creature struggles for its own existence, though to the destruction of others : the odious instincts which exist in some animals, such as the young cuckoo, to oust its foster-brothers, or the ants to make slaves. Animated nature is “red in tooth

and claw." We stand aghast, and raise questions like that of Blake in his little poem to the tiger: "Did He who made the lamb make thee?" I doubt if such facts can be quite accounted for, and another chapter would be needed to deal with the problem, but the difficulty can be lessened by several considerations. Darwin thinks that imperfect adaptations are due to the transition through which the organism is passing, and that the instincts referred to are not "specially endowed or created instincts, but small consequences of one general law, leading to the advancement of all organic being." The same imperfections occur in the moral order of things, and good men are wont to explain them by a reference to general laws. If some facts of nature are terrible, still they are proofs of intelligent, though not so plainly of benevolent design. And at worst they are but a few exceptions, in a vast system of co-ordinations and adjustments for the production of the most beneficent ends. Whether the universe be viewed as a whole or in detail, it is full of the grandest order and most exquisite contrivance, teeming with utility and beauty and symmetry everywhere.

Nor does the doctrine of evolution interfere with the teleological argument. Should it be more



widely established than it is, it would not render the idea of a divine mind originating nature, and working in it, less tenable. There is no antagonism between them. Nay, it is an inspiring conception to look upon nature, in all its departments, as intimately linked, from primordial germ to the most fully developed organism—from its rudest speck to its subtlest symmetry of form, or most delicate beauty of colour. The idea of growth and vital affinity is a higher idea than that of mere technic, after the manner of men. Religion has no concern with any mere physical theories of the origin of things. Nothing within the province of nature, no change in the view of its operations, affects the primal thought. Mind is there, as the light of all our seeing, whether nature works by evolution or by special fiat. Science is free to interpret its plans, but the existence of plans under any conception is the witness to our minds of another mind behind and over all.

*The faculty of Conscience compels us to the recognition of a Supreme Moral Being.*

The argument from conscience is called the moral argument, and it carries us to a solemn and impressive point in our discovery of the being and attributes of God. It not only proves that God is,

but what He is—supreme and perfect Goodness. It is the consciousness of moral law, bears witness to moral law as the rule of duty, and lodges in every man a sense of responsibility to do what it requires. Conscience is the faculty which acts as the discernor of right and wrong in our nature, and as the judge of our conduct, accusing or excusing, uttering praise or blame with an imperative voice, and thus pointing straight to a supreme and perfect will, as the foundation of all authority and obligation. We put our finger on the distinctive character of right and wrong, when we single out that word “obligation,” to express most clearly men’s belief that the origin of right comes from some higher world than our own. Conscience is “the vicegerent in the heart,” as Dr. Chalmers used to argue, from whose testimony we can infer “the righteousness of the Sovereign who placed it there.”

So cogent and irresistible is this argument, that attempts have been made to evade it by finding the derivation of conscience from below, in the growth of selfish preferences and family instincts. Hardly anything could be more inadequate and unsatisfactory, than Darwin’s account of the parentage of conscience. He traces it to the bond

of the herd, and the award of the multitude; he derives it from the instinct of society, the instinct which causes the flock to confide in the courage of its leader, and causes the leader's delight in the submission of the flock. From such rude instincts the consciousness of right and wrong, the sentiment of praise and blame, has been derived by the agnostic school of thought. Could anything be more derogatory to conscience, the apex and crown of our nature? It is an explanation which, in its anxiety to avoid the conviction of divine authority, rejects the most stubborn testimony of conscience itself. It does not account for the sense of obligation which confronts and defies it in every way. The word "ought" expresses a species of necessity, which nature does not, and cannot present to the mind of man. We know also that the deeds which win the moral homage of the world, are those which have been dared by men who acted in direct defiance of social and conventional standards, and in obedience to some higher standard which lays its yoke upon them, and carries with it the categorical imperative of duty, weighing upon them as the truth of the planetary system weighed upon the mind of Galileo. Nor does such a view explain the feelings of remorse and penitence that are

among the deepest experiences of our moral nature. "If," says Dr. Newman, "we feel responsibility, are ashamed, are frightened, at transgressing the voice of conscience, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible, before whom we are ashamed, whose claims upon us we fear. . . . Conscience excites all these painful emotions, confusion, foreboding, self-condemnation; and on the other hand, it sheds upon us a deep peace, a sense of security, a resignation, and a hope, which there is no sensible earthly object to elicit. . . . If the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the object to which man's perception is directed must be supernatural and divine; and thus the phenomena of conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive."

Some teachers would, for belief in a Divine Ruler, substitute a kind of moral idealism, such as moved the soul of the poet Shelley; but such creations of the brain, woven of poetry and philosophy, could never take the place of real religion. No such idealism can fasten its hold on our nature, claim positive authority over conscience, or exert any greater influence than belongs to a reigning

fashion in manners or a school of taste in art. As a power to command, it cannot sway like the deep-rooted belief of men that their life is guided by the will of a righteous intelligence, which may be resisted, but to resist which is to kick against the pricks.

The phenomena of moral life cannot be explained by any agnostic system of thought. It must point to some real stable foundation for human affections, for the existence of human law, for the obligation of righteousness. Allow even that conscience may be derivative, and that the growth of moral sentiments can be traced, still behind that growth the question remains, What is the foundation of moral obligation? Suppose that the eye grew in the same way, and that we could trace every step in the physiological development of the eye, all this would not explain the origin of light. As the eye does not make light, so the growth of moral sentiments does not make moral truth. The eye does not create the sun. Conscience does not create "the Sun of righteousness," but has been made to recognise it. Righteousness is not a by-product of consciousness; it is either at the heart of things, or it has no real existence whatever. Can we give up the sanctities of home, the sanctions of law which cement the state, the obligations of

personal duty, as things which have no foundation in reality, for a system that bids us look on man as an automaton or disguised machine? Professed agnosticism in religion cannot stop there—it will go on to professed agnosticism in morals. “You say that thoughts of a personal, righteous God are illusions, and that it is immoral to believe them. On your showing, the principles of morality are proved to be delusions, and therefore it is immoral to believe them.” We are coming to that. The question propounded lately, “Is marriage a failure?” points that way. As well ask, “Is man a failure?” and touch the bottom of this absurdity. No, the voice of conscience rises clear above the strife of tongues, and it forbids us to think ourselves the sport of illusion, and it compels us to believe in a sovereign Judge of right and wrong, in the spiritual consequences of our actions, and in the rewards of merit and demerit in some real life, here or hereafter. There is no reality in human life at all, if the witness of conscience is not real. And for all the ages, its witness has been the same. “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding.”

Let us learn from this subject,—

1. A lesson of humility. We are finite, but



God is infinite—what, then, can we know of His absolute nature, His unlimited personality, His all-powerful, all-wise, and all-righteous attributes? We are all agnostics in a true sense; religion would be shallow without its agnosticisms. Job cries, “Who can by searching find out God?” One of the Psalms says, “His greatness is unsearchable.” Isaiah represents Him as saying, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Paul speaks of God as “dwelling in light which no man can approach unto.” Cyprian writes, “We cannot see Him—He is too bright for our vision; we cannot scan Him—He is too great for our intelligence; and therefore we but think of Him worthily when we own Him to be beyond our thought.” Hooker, in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, observes, “Dangerous it were for the feeble brains of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him, not indeed as He is, neither can know Him.” He maintains His transcendence by veiling the mysteries of His being and the judg-



ments of His providence, that He may call forth in us a humbler trust, a deeper awe, a meeker resignation, and a holier obedience.

2. A lesson of toleration. In trying to comprehend the power behind the veil, so vast and awful, no wonder if men think and feel that nothing worthy thereof can be expressed in mortal speech, and no wonder if they protest against a lax habit of representing the Deity in the guise, and with the passions, of a human being. Present-day science may strip the First Cause of the attributes which seem to make religion possible, and plunge its votaries into a still drearier scepticism; but there is a certain law of recoil, like that of the pendulum, which is sure to come back to renewed and larger faith. Let us therefore be tolerant towards science, and confident that the shadows of its temporary agnosticisms will pass away.

3. A lesson of communion. The gospel of Christ is God revealed, full of grace and truth. His apostle says, "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." Christ gives us the true revelation of the character of God, and sets Him forth as One who gives and asks the purest love of which the heart can form any conception, and who is indeed wholly unverifiable by

us unless He verify Himself in us. But this He seeks to do in every one of us. Let the belief, then, be vital, that the soul can commune with Him, can make itself heard by Him, can hear His word and obey it, can feel His love and return it. For if our life be thus hid with Christ in God, we shall prove it to be, not only the special blessing of purity, and the special source of strength in temptation, but the infinite spring of joy which eye has not seen nor ear has heard, and which it has not entered the heart of man to conceive.

### III.

#### *THE GOSPEL AND SCIENCE.*

“THERE are two books,” says a quaint old writer, “from which I collect my divinity ; besides that written one of God, another one of His servant, Nature — that universal and public manuscript which lies expanded unto the eyes of all.” Here, then, are the two great revelations of God to men. They are the expression of His infinite mind, and both alike declare His glory. As each of them bears the broad signature of Godhead, they have a co-ordinate authority, and point out the only two realms into which it is possible for the human mind to perform excursions of thought. We cannot rise above nature in our physical inquiries ; man can only act, as Bacon has well shown, as the interpreter of nature. True science is the simple and reverent interpretation of “that universal and public manuscript which lies expanded unto the eyes of all.” So, in like manner, with the written

record, which gives a reflection in human hearts of divine realities. It is the record of spiritual truth, as nature is the record of physical truth. In Scripture we have all the treasures of spiritual knowledge exquisitely adapted to the spiritual wants of man. We cannot transcend nature in physical discovery ; nor can we transcend Scripture in religious discovery. All that we can attempt to do is to find deeper interpretations of the two volumes. We cannot exhaust the immense plenitude of nature and its wonders ; nor can we exhaust the infinite greatness of Christ and His gospel. They are equally authoritative revelations of the will of God. And so we infer that the God of Nature is the God of Scripture. Throughout the two records we trace the evident handwriting of one Divine Author ; they are a first and a second volume of the thoughts of God. There may be apparent discrepancies between them, as we should expect, where variety in unity is the apparent aim of each ; but to say that they can really contradict each other, is to hold that God gives revelations of Himself that are suicidal and untrue. We are entitled, therefore, to maintain that the deductions of science and the teachings of Scripture will be at one, as the works and words of God must be,

*if they are rightly interpreted.* This last clause, "if rightly interpreted," is the true solvent of the question as bearing on the relations between religion and science, a vital question in this age of brilliant research, and one surrounded with great difficulty.

An important part needs to be played by the Christian teacher, that of a mediator between the destructive and constructive forces of our time. Our object will be to mediate between the votaries of science and religion, and to show that while conflict may be raging on the surface, deeper down are to be found the most beautiful harmonies.

I. *The conflict between Science and Religion.*

Science and religion stand as representatives of two orders of being, and two sources of knowledge; and though they be distinct and independent, man belongs to both, and has that which answers to them in his twofold nature. Science takes to do with the phenomena of the external world, with whatever comes under the observation of our senses, and aims at grouping all facts under general laws. Newton brought the phenomena of the physical world under the great law of gravitation. Darwin connected the phenomena of organic life into the great law of natural selection. Scientists

recognise the changes of force to be infinite, without increasing or diminishing it by a single particle, and summarise this truth into the great law of the correlation of physical forces. On the other hand, religion takes to do with another sphere beyond nature, over it and under it and in it, which science does not explain, but perpetually comes up to in the course of inquiry, and cannot therefore deny. Here great realities, orders, and forces exist, and here the origin and end of all things are to be found. Man himself belongs to this sphere, while connected by a thousand links to the present physical order. As a being with mind and self-consciousness he stands at the verge of matter, distinct from it, and looking off into a world of spirit. As a being with will and conscience he takes his place in a higher order of life, in a spiritual world, whose law is moral and eternal, necessary and universal, as no law which is physical can be. As a being with personal identity, subject to this moral law, he is compelled to recognise the fountain of it as having the same distinctive mark, and as being the Eternal Holy One Himself.

Such are the two spheres, independent, yet with which man is inseparably connected. They have

their postulates, which, if not granted, lead to inextricable confusion and strife. Science requires us to believe in the unbroken uniformities of nature, in the regular sequence of phenomena; and it is this postulate which makes the study of nature so infinitely interesting and beautiful. Regularities glimmer through promiscuous confusion; analogies between phenomena of a different order suggest themselves and stir the imagination; the intellect is haunted with the sense of a vast unity not yet discoverable; and the spirit, fascinated by such variety, loves to discern in the sequences of nature the forms and operations of divine laws. Religion also has its postulates, and claims that the order of mind, of spirit, of moral law, is the real eternal order, of which matter is only the manifestation or scaffolding. There is a higher order, of which man is a part, and God is the head. Man is spirit, and not matter. There is a spirit in man, and there is a spirit above man. There is a sphere beyond nature in the widest sense, and inclusive of nature, a universal self-consciousness, the source of spiritual life, with whom our higher being is capable of converse, to whom it is authoritatively subject, by whom it is constantly disciplined, and with whom it is destined



to abide for ever. The denial of this, of spirit in man and above man, of a divine reason within him and governing him, involves blank materialism and atheism, from which, however, all science, worthy of the name, shrinks back in horror, thereby proving the reasonableness of the postulate which religion makes in the terms now stated by us.

If these postulates could have been duly regarded by the friends of science and the friends of religion, nothing could have emerged to disturb the amity which ought to exist between them. Within such ample verge the most perfect liberty of thought and expression ought to be allowed in all directions, and truth should, and even error may, be left to speak for themselves. While the cause of truth, both in science and religion, ought to be served with the utmost freedom of thought and language, and while each ought to be maintained at any cost, short of logical or moral inconsistency, there has been perpetual danger of the one cause coming into conflict with the other. The friends of each, instead of working quietly and diligently side by side, have fallen out, and become rivals, and like hostile tribes have crossed into one another's territories on destructive errands. Each has suspected the other of being in error or in the

wrong, and each has been too ready to exasperate the other to the affray. It is no doubt the case that only after prolonged conflict does the higher and better truth get any chance of asserting itself; but what must always be lamented is, that the struggle for it has been attended with so much bitterness and exasperation of spirit. The display of bias and bigotry is not confined to any one party; it must be traced to the fallibility and prejudice common to human nature. The party first in the fault was the party of religion, that began at an early period to dread free inquiry and to fetter it with dogmatic restrictions. As we follow the stream of ecclesiastical history upwards through past ages, we come upon traces of ignorance, passion, and infirmity in the Church's leaders, who clearly set themselves up as infallible expounders of all truth. There was a time when cloistered ecclesiastics fled from the light of day, nor cared for the stars, as they came out every night to suggest the infinite wonder and glory of the universe. They never thought of beholding the glory of God in the face of nature. When science began to be, they reckoned it inimical to Scripture, and imagined they were doing God service by proscribing all physical inquiry, and

reducing life to a matter of secluded contemplation. The lamp of piety borrowed none of its light from the splendours of creation. The guardians of religion did all they could to stay the course of scientific discovery, thundering forth anathemas on the head of every pioneer to new vistas of truth. It is well known that students of nature in the middle ages, like Albert the Great, teacher of Aquinas, and Roger Bacon, were suspected of being in league with the devil, and were subjected to bodily punishments or thrown into prison on account of their experimental researches. Everybody is familiar with the case of Galileo. Perhaps there is truth in the surmise, that the sanguine habit of this philosopher led him into tilting against the ecclesiastical authorities of his time; but nothing can excuse the enormous oppression of those men, who compelled him, on his knees, to abjure what he well knew to be true, and what all the world now knows to be true.

Come down to Protestant times, and the devotees of science have fared not much better. When an illustrious, though now forgotten countryman of our own, Dr. Hutton, propounded his theory of the earth, and demanded indefinite cycles of time for the *Testimony of the Rocks*,

he was assailed with the most virulent abuse. He was called infidel, sceptic, atheist; and alas! it is sad to think how some have been made infidels by such modes of assault. Fanatical opponents to the teachings of geology long waged war with it, because it seemed to contradict the opening chapters of the Bible, and they persisted in attempts to throw discredit on the new science. It was the same when Charles Darwin published the *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*, and set forth the doctrine of natural selection identified with his name. The anathemas which his works provoked from the orthodox are still fresh in our memory. All the resources of ridicule, scorn, and abuse were poured out upon the great naturalist, who calmly continued his researches, heeding not the storm which ignorance and passion gathered about him.

Enough has been said of the hostility of religion to science. In these later days a great change in their relations to one another has taken place. Since the Reformation, free inquiry has been the motto written on the banner of Protestant nations. The law of progress has carried us far into the domains of nature, and revealed to us a kind of fairyland of things wonderful. In this grand

march of mind, science has with adventurous stride not only skirted the borders, but likewise passed far into the domain of the higher revelation, and it has done so in a spirit of opposition and defiance, intensified by the memory of past persecutions and the pride of great and brilliant discoveries. It rebels against the traditional view of the universe which religion imposes as dogma, and to maintain which it fetters the freedom of inquiry. Science proclaims itself not a mere rebel against the reigning religion, but a rival religion. The change in its tone is very marked of late. The scientist assumes the air of a priest, claims to be a priest of truth, and asks with lofty self-consciousness what any Christian priest can have to say to him. When the subject is theology or religion, he treats it as something sentimental or unreal, and thinks that the edge of controversy cannot be too sharp, and insensibly takes the crusader and the iconoclast for his models. We have no desire to exaggerate differences, to cultivate a taste for discord, or to write a book, as Draper has done, on the *Conflict of Religion and Science*, but there can be no doubt that the antagonism between the two is very real in our day. Patient, disinterested study of the visible world, instead of leaving men of

science, as we should expect, awestruck on the threshold of the invisible world, does in fact, at the present day, take them far away from it, till it seems to have no existence. "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," said the apostle. "The invisible things of God are possibly nothing at all," say quite sincerely those who know far more of things that are made than Paul or any one else in any former age of the world's history could know. And this aversion to religion leaves the votaries of science in a world of forces blind, deaf, and senseless; reckless of the havoc they make and the hopes they destroy. Science makes nature, in the garb of fate and necessity, shut out God, and leaves men with consciences and hearts to be crushed as the moth in a world of pitiless fact.

In the first flush of victorious research the man of science began to cherish a consciousness of intellectual pride. He came back from excursions into nature with discoveries that seemed to explode the authority of Scripture. He arrayed himself with startling facts that conflicted with the orthodoxy of the Church. This provoked the theologian to take the field. With mind unskilled in scientific method, how did he meet the adversary? Too



often with rash denunciation and wretched narrow-mindedness. He laid about him with weapons which, if they did not cut deep, made a ringing noise in their fall. He thought he had only to speak *ex cathedrâ*, and the facts of science would be demolished. Many whose veneration for the theologian was unbounded swallowed his infallible pretension, but the man of science, not so easily duped, saw through the dignified oracle, and became a few degrees more sceptical. The theologian was apt to regard every new message from nature with suspicion, to dread every discovery of the philosopher as an arrow flung at religion, and to regard science as tendering her help, when she did so, only that she might more slyly give her companion's crutch a kick, and leave him sprawling in the mire.

If dogmatism was the fault of the theologian, can the man of science be counted free from it? Prejudice, narrow-mindedness, want of charity, do not belong to one class; they lie deeper down than theology, politics, and science; they are part of the common depravity that taints our race. It is too much the fashion to hurl jibes at the defenders of old beliefs, and treat them with supercilious contempt. This is not charity; it is



something quite the reverse, and unworthy of what men owe to one another, wherever engaged in the pursuit of truth. The fact is, that the charge made against the champion of faith may with equal force be retorted on the man of science. Has not the spirit of dogmatic confidence largely changed sides? "You tell me," says Henry Rogers, "that the theologian believes a dogma because it is old; and do not our modern speculators often believe their shining novelties, for a similar, though an opposite reason, just because they are new? You tell me that many cling to certain opinions because they wish the Bible to be true; and is it not too evident, from the tone of many, that they think an opinion charming because they wish the Bible to be false? You tell us that, of course, this or that work, in defence of an 'effete orthodoxy,' is received with praise by all the orthodox journals, and that we can tell beforehand the organs that will applaud. And cannot we do the same in reference to any novel bit of heterodoxy? Can we not lay our finger beforehand on the very journals that will pet and patronize that, even though it be directly in the teeth of some other heterodoxy, which it has already petted and patronized?" There is an *odium scientificum* as

well as an *odium theologicum*, and they are both alike odious, not as the fruit of theology or science, but of the passion and prejudice inherent in human nature. From the squabbles of the past we should learn to guard against being carried away by intemperate zeal into controversy, where, after all, we may only be fighting with a windmill, and, after making ourselves ridiculous, be forced to quit the arena crestfallen and with trailing plumes. And if theology will part with the conceit of assuming to be "queen of the sciences," and clothe itself with humility, and be willing to accept a report from the other side, it will lead to good feeling, and secure respectful acknowledgment of each other's conclusions.

Another cause of strife is the proneness of science to hasty generalisation. In giving his inductive method to the world, Lord Bacon observes that, "through the premature and precipitate hurry of the understanding, great danger may be apprehended;" and since his time ample proof has been given of a tendency to arrive at conclusions from imperfect data, and of the dogmatic complacency with which these conclusions have been announced. But how often have they been reversed and overturned! Science has had its share of controversies

within its own borders, and its own votaries have been fiercely arrayed against each other. Its disciples, like theologians, have had to recant their errors or modify their first conclusions. Leibnitz charged the system of Newton with being irreligious, and Humboldt joined in the same charge. Benjamin Franklin's views on electricity were ridiculed in the Royal Society of London, and are now accepted as sound. The old doctrine of the planets being kept in their course by a balance of centripetal and centrifugal forces is now exploded. Count Rumford's experiments on heat and energy in the end of last century were neglected for forty years, and are now part of established science. Darwin, with admirable moderation, stated the origin of life to be from a few humble progenitors, but many of his followers believe in spontaneous generation, while admitting there is not a particle of scientific proof for it. It is something like the old authority in religion, which sets up dogmas, and proceeds to denounce when belief is withheld. The creed of science in many quarters is coming to be that the laws of matter are capable of accounting for everything; that all the capacities of sensation, consciousness, and thought lie hid in protoplasm or star-dust.

Science gives no proof of this. Huxley calls it an act of philosophic faith, but it is only an unverified dogma—a prejudiced superstition of science. Errors and assumptions of this kind pass for scientific knowledge, and are inevitable to fallible men in quest of truth. There is need of modesty and caution in accepting new theories for these three reasons. The great lawgiver of experimental science advises care and circumspection. Next, science is ever-changing and incomplete. The darling theory of to-day may be upset by new facts to-morrow. And then hasty induction should profit from past mistakes, for who needs to be told what startling conclusions have been announced by rash inquirers—conclusions which would have torn up the roots of religion, but which, after careful examination, have been found to corroborate the teachings of religion?

Another cause of conflict arises out of the fear of open and candid inquiry. Defenders of the faith have been disposed to distrust physical researches, to look askance upon them instead of looking into them. And students of science think that the theologian dare not trust himself to new light, and would rather quench it if he could. Now, we must not be afraid of inquiry

nor of debate, if conducted with candour and charity. Truth must be self-consistent; and "truth, like a torch, the more it is shook, it shines." Let there be no repression or concealment. We should meet the men of science half-way, and say, "Next to truth itself, frankness of speech; give us all your facts, and let us make truth, for its own sake, our common search." Had we such candour of spirit on both sides, there would never be occasion for alarm. If one lesson is more clearly demonstrated than another in these conflicts, it is the vitality of religion. The timid believer has only to behold the arena of controversy, where the Word of God has broken lances with a thousand redoubtable foes, there to see the object of his reverence standing erect and alone in its pristine vigour. Since the birth of science, the Bible has stood the brunt of an incessant warfare, and yet it is clothed in more than the panoply of its ancient power. It has taken up its own position in the world; stands there to proclaim the divine origin and destiny of man, and cannot be ejected. The trial of its strength has always issued in good. Every onset has proved the plenitude of its inherent vitality and the perpetual freshness of its power.

Champion after champion has fallen prostrate at its feet ; after they have done their utmost to lay it low, and failed, it has stripped the conquered of their armour, and adorned itself.

## II. *The harmony between Science and Religion.*

The two provinces, though distinct, cannot be kept in total isolation from one another. It is true that a marked difference exists between the two kinds of truth set forth in the two revelations. One is the supernatural domain of God's manifestation : the other is the natural. These two departments of truth are very different, but not at variance ; widely apart at some points, but never at an infinite distance, or opposed. It is not always easy to define the marches, or for students to keep within their respective borders. The theologian should not dictate to the man of science regarding any natural fact which the latter has verified, and when the man of science leaves the domain of physics, and begins to talk metaphysics, he may be no authority worth heeding, and may rather be suspected of trespass. But the two provinces dovetail into one another. Some think that the two kinds of truth are unrelated, and that no search for harmony should be made. They come out of the hostile camps, bearing a flag of



truce, and saying, "Keep to your province, and we will keep to ours. They have nothing to do with each other." Such counsel leads to nothing but an armed neutrality ; it is dangerous reasoning, for every one truth, wherever we find it, is linked on to every other truth in this *universe* of God. Any collision that has occurred is due not to difference in the records themselves, but in our interpretation of the one or the other, or of both. The fault is not in either record, but in man's reading of it. The words and the works of God cannot be at variance. Science is a fallible thing, and so is theology. Why? Because they are man's readings of the two records. But the records are true. Why? Because they come from God. This solution of difficulties cannot be too simply or persistently asserted.

The history of science furnishes proof enough of real harmony with religion. Galileo was dragged to the prison of the Inquisition for publishing his discovery ; it was held wicked to believe that the earth went round the sun. Under the tortures of the rack, he was forced to renounce his conviction, though it always returned with overpowering force, and made him say, "It does move, though." Nowadays, we cannot imagine



the alarm created in the Church by Galileo's discovery. Yet all the difficulty arose from a false interpretation of the theologian, who had accepted a literal reading of the sun rising and setting, and dogmatically clung to it till the truth of Galileo's discovery could no longer be questioned. Then some more sagacious divine entered the enemy's camp, accepted the discovery, and closed the conflict by showing that Scripture speaks of the sun rising and setting in a popular, and not scientific, sense. That explanation removed all anxiety. Both parties are agreed, while the disclosures of astronomy from the days of Galileo to the time of Herschel have been grandly interpreting the words of the Psalm, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy hands, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Again, it was a startling demand to make by the Huttonian theory of the earth that countless ages were required for the compilations of the rocky volume, instead of six or seven thousand years, so long the traditional belief of the Church. It seemed as if the opening chapters of Genesis must be untrue; friends of the Bible were thrown into panic, and in

these new scientific doctrines they detected the cloven hoof of infidelity. So did the conflict rage till Chalmers came forward with his broader interpretation to set it at rest, while the researches of geology are helping to elucidate the truth of another Psalm: "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

Schemes of reconciliation between Genesis and science have often been attempted, though not so much of late, because such attempts can never secure literal harmony, and because both sides now perceive that the Bible account of creation does not profess to teach the science of the matter at all. In writing it, the purpose was not to anticipate the discoveries of physical science, or the labours of such students as Copernicus, Newton, and Darwin. The two accounts are in different regions, and differ in spirit and aim as much as they do in details. Too much has been made of the days of creation in the Bible record, whether as literal days of twenty-four hours or long periods. They are not referred to in the subsequent course of revelation. In Psalm civ., where the same order of creation is given, the number of days and the chronological divisions are dropped as

unimportant, because they seem to be merely a Hebrew framework or setting, accidental rather than essential to the account, suggesting, if they were meant to convey any lesson, that creation was not a timeless, instantaneous act, but a gradual orderly process, which is the master-theory of modern times. It is the moral and spiritual purpose that forms the inspiring element in the mind of the sacred cosmogonist. "He had to teach that the world as we see it, and all therein contained, was created out of nothing; and that the spiritual and not the material was the source of all existence. He had to teach that the creation was not merely orderly, but progressive; going from the formless to the formed; from the orderless to the ordered; from the inanimate to the animate; from the plant to the animal; from the lower animal to the higher; from the beast to the man; ending with the rest of the Sabbath, the type of the highest, the spiritual life."<sup>1</sup> Here then, in the magnificent Hymn of Creation with which Scripture opens, and which tallies so exactly with the modern doctrine of evolution, we have demonstrated the prescient wisdom of God in dictating inspired statements which, while they do

<sup>1</sup> *Relations between Religion and Science*; Bishop Temple.

not conflict with the popular notions of an unscientific age, can yet be reconciled with the discoveries of the nineteenth century.

The doctrine of evolution is thought to be unfavourable to religion, but in the best and truest sense of the term Scripture is evolutionary, and religion as well as science participates in the light shed by that great modern doctrine. Two distinct accounts of man's origin and nature are given in the first two chapters of Genesis. His supremacy among the creatures, as having been made in the image of God, is taught in the first chapter, and science declares him to be the highest product of nature—the crown of creation. The sacred record also intimates that he has been formed out of the dust of the ground, possesses a material nature like other earthly organisms; while science busies itself with the links which relate him to creatures from below. The law of evolution, as one affecting every realm of nature, and operating too in the sphere of religion, now obtains general recognition, though many gaps in the theory are not filled up, and some of its fundamental factors are unknown. It postulates something, for it does not undertake to evolve something out of nothing. It requires something vital, for it cannot explain

the unrolling of life from dead matter. It cannot explain the powers of reproduction, of variation, and of inheritance. So that it needs to assume the great mysteries of creation, of life, of generation, of variability, and of heredity. There is nothing in Darwin's theory inconsistent with belief in a Creator. His books might be adopted as the scientific text-books of any religious system of education. The theory of evolution cannot touch the question of final causes, or invalidate Paley's argument from design, as it is concerned with the how, and not with the why of things. It only introduces a change in the method of execution, and shows design working, not by special acts of creation, but by slow, self-acting processes of development. Under this aspect the field of illustration for Paley's argument is only vastly enlarged by the theory of evolution. "No other theory of the universe seems to require in such vast proportions the elements of forethought, purpose, and forecast of the end from the beginning. Who can believe that anything is unfolded in fact which has not been unfolded in thought? Who can take into his hand a seed, and consider the marvellous forces and powers wrapped up in that little thing,—consider the predestination of

which it is the subject, the definite ends and aims to which it is directed, separate from those of all other seeds,—and not feel something like awe, something like conviction that nothing but prescience could have created such a thing? And the seed is the type and incarnation of the doctrine of evolution.” When the evolutionist says, “Give me the smallest organism, and I will show you how all living creatures have been formed: give me the smallest spark of consciousness, and I will show how man’s mental and spiritual nature has come about,” there is no need to suspect him of trying to get rid of a Divine Creator. For to think that God did not make the organisms of this world because they had small beginnings, is to think that God did not make the tree because it grew out of a little seed, that He did not make the butterfly because it first appeared as a grub, that He did not make man because he is born a baby.

Of course, there is a form of evolution held by some students of science who wish to dispense with the need of a creator, and prefer to believe that the world made itself. They claim more or less to explain the universe by matter and impersonal force: they claim a right to say that life



arose from spontaneous generation, that the grey matter of the brain originates thought, that the beast is the true ancestor of man, and that man's intellectual, moral, and æsthetic faculties are subtle products of matter and force. The theory has just to be stated to prove it a heap of huge assumptions, without a single particle of scientific proof. It is hoped and believed that evidence will yet be found, and natural selection, or the broader principle of the correlation of physical forces, is the magician's wand that gives being to them all. The ablest men of science acknowledge the impossibility of explaining even the most imperfect indications of life, the blunt sensations of lowest organisms, by the mechanism of physical forces; and how is it possible, then, to explain such faculties as consciousness, reason, will, and conscience in the same way? Only go deep enough, and the most obstinate materialist may be made to see that matter is not all the universe, nor mind the outcome of trembling atoms. Nature is a great unity with all its variety, and it has not been ushered into existence at once, but evolved in a continual process up to man, and the process has not been left to accidental or mechanical forces of variation from below; it has been guided by typical prin-



ciples and ideal purposes which it is the high distinction of man consciously to realise. There lies at the foundation of nature, not merely an external law, rigid or fortuitous, but a rational, logical, and especially a moral ideal to account for its marvellous unity. Further investigations into nature can only confirm this. We need have no fear of true science, however much we may have of false science and of false theology too. But the tendencies of modern science, if carefully read, point towards a sublime spirituality—towards the belief that all matter is but force, and all force is but mind. The substance of all phenomena, of all thought, of all manifestation, is God, or of God.

If evolution be an ascending and all-including plan and progress already in the eternal mind, then it is in no way derogatory to the dignity of man to teach that he had formerly his origin in these processes of nature, that he derives his physical, and even his mental structure, without a break of continuity, from the creatures beneath him. If it shall be found that the ascent of species has proceeded by insensible variations and accumulations of these from below, we must admit that the Power directing these processes wrought in this fashion up to man, unfolding in him those elements

which are his specific signature, and are wanting everywhere else in nature. It is not robbing man of his dignity, or degrading him to the level of the brutes, to recognise processes which, while linking him to the other tenants of our globe, have lifted him to a place immeasurably above them. His dignity consists in what he now is, in his possession of a moral and spiritual nature. But let us not speak of the brutes with contempt, as though they had nothing of their Maker in them. What cause for shame is it to be organically linked with the brooding care of a brute for her young, the self-sacrifice of a lioness dying for her whelps, or the fidelity of a dog dying for his master? There is no reason to be ashamed of such kinship. Indeed, the impulse which makes the mother delight in shielding and nourishing and educating the little creatures committed to her charge, is just on a limited scale that love which we ascribe to our Saviour, and it contains potentially what needs only more sympathy or intelligence to transform it into that very same love which John describes as the highest attribute of God.

Evolution is an incomplete theory; there is many a break of continuity. The origin of life is a break at the lower end, and at the upper end

self-consciousness is another. It is impossible to indicate the steps by which self-consciousness has arisen from lower stages of animal life—it is a closed circle to the purely organic world. It makes man into a new and wonderful personality, and makes him distinct from the rest of creation. It turns him from the under world to gaze on a world above him, as that to which his highest affinities point, and in which he must learn to live and move and have his being. When self-consciousness appears on the scene, like the appearance of life, it marks the beginning of a series to which the preceding served only as a condition. To naturalist and theologian alike it must appear that the realisation and revelation of the original idea of humanity is the determining principle for which all things in nature existed as means. Instead of making man the product of the animal world, it is far more likely that the animal world is evolved from the idea of humanity. From the beginning, the processes of nature have been tending towards man as their ultimate end. Evolution, as a general law or method, does not go on for ever developing into new forms. The process has its limits or end in the case of each species. It produces a species of plant or animal by the laws of descent and

variation, and having done so, it leaves that species at a completed stage, and goes no further. Development proceeds in definite directions to termini or adult conditions. Hence the permanence of species, and hence the reason why you see no evolution going on now. The story of life on our earth is a story of ordered and completed evolution. Man has reached the end of his physical evolution, and cannot rise into a higher species of being. His structure now does not surpass the perfection it reached in Egypt or Greece, though it has had time enough to develop and preserve any variations. "The definite lines of development on which the head had gradually risen to the perfection exhibited by the classic sculptors are incapable of being carried further; the face is carried back under the skull so far that it could not be carried back to a greater extent, and leave room for teeth, tongue, and throat." Physical evolution is completed in man, who is its terminus and crown; and the evolutions of the future must be sought in realms with which the naturalist acknowledges that he has nothing to do, and take origin out of the special and distinguishing attributes of man. There the laws of struggle for existence, natural selection, heredity, and

variation have new fields of activity, and there other evolutions are shown to be at work, and more will appear.

By the possession of self-consciousness, reason, will, and conscience, man stands related to a world above him. As a personal being, he rises above nature ; has in him the power of new beginnings, of choosing between motives, of initiating new acts, and forecasting his destiny. What worlds of new evolution open out to a being with such capacities ! Religion and faith, its instrument, beckon him to these vistas and new blessed ascents. Essentially, man is a spirit clothed in a bodily form. His spiritual essence links him to orders of intelligence above him, as his body connects him with the animal world below him. " He becomes, as it were, the whole creation, and its whole struggle is repeated in him and by him, but in conjunction with other factors and on another stage. Heredity conserves and strives to fix the past, but the moral within him, and the spiritual environment around him, contend against heredity, and select and nourish that which is best. The animal is kept down and crowded out, giving place to intellectual and moral and spiritual habits and qualities. . . . The methods and features are evolutionary, but he

himself is the force presiding over all, resisting or co-operating with Him who is over and in all." It is an advantage in the theory of evolution over others that it brings God nearer to the world. It has taught us to see that God is not adequately described as a great Artificer who made the world complete by an original fiat, and then sat apart from His creation, but as immanent in all His creatures, a constant and all-pervasive factor. It has taught us that God is present and operative through law in spiritual as in physical matters.

Life, seen in the light of its highest consciousness, means the attractive power of One who would draw all creatures into communion with Himself. Let us live our life in Him who has come near to us as the Word of God, who became flesh in Jesus Christ, now and always the life and the light of men. Let us accord to the fulness of divine power and wisdom and condescension, a closer and larger place in our experience. Let us live in contact with the Infinite Spirit who ever waits to flood our own. God is not exhausted, and we are still unfinished creatures ; but we have eternity before us, and through it we shall pass into greater fulness of being, as we approach nearer and ever nearer the one Source of all.

#### IV.

### *THE GOSPEL AND SCIENCE—THE LAW OF HEREDITY.*

It had long been recognised among men, as a fact beyond dispute, that any advantageous quality, once acquired, will be preserved, and then passed on from generation to generation, but only within recent years has it been raised to the position of a great scientific law. Men had long observed that such an aptitude as that which belonged to a shepherd's or sportsman's dog must be hereditary, and that in many of the affairs of human life, for good or ill, experience is handed on from sire to offspring; but it was reserved for students of science to extend indefinitely the working of the process, and explain by its aid many of the phenomena connected with plant and animal life. Darwin finds the whole explanation of organic forms under the law of heredity, conjoined with the law of variation. The quintessence of his theory represents the process of nature as one of



minute variations continued and accumulated through long tracts of time. How this process operates, and why, can as yet be very indistinctly known. In what way any useful peculiarity is passed on by descent, whether by an impression upon a nerve, or a force conveyed to some secret cell, or a quality infused into the blood, the man of science cannot explain; but the fact is indisputable, that characters are inherited, do become in course of time impressed upon the elements of the embryo, and are converted into a property or strain of the race. Darwin confesses that science throws no light on this process. In the first chapter of his *Origin of Species*, he says: "The laws governing inheritance are quite unknown. No one can say why the same peculiarity in different individuals of the same species, and in individuals of different species, is sometimes inherited and sometimes not so; why it often reverts, in certain characters, to its grandfather or grandmother, or other much more remote ancestor; why a peculiarity is often transmitted from one sex to both sexes, or to one sex alone, more commonly, but not exclusively, to the like sex." The Darwinian theory cannot account for the beginning of heredity or of variation, though it may explain in some

measure the gradations of these processes in the evolution of life. It tends, in an exaggerated form, to regard acquired characters as inheritable. Heredity is not so much a power as a process, not so much a force as a short way of expressing a series of facts, the how and why of which are too deep for man to fathom. But the aptitudes and tastes of ancestry are communicated, though in ways unknown, to their descendants, and the process which men of science find to be at work in nature is found to operate still more mysteriously and impressively in the sphere of moral and religious experience.

Good service is rendered to the cause of religion when we can trace "natural law in the spiritual world." The brilliant generalisations of modern science may be turned by the true mediator between science and religion into a faithful source of illustration regarding the higher processes and laws of human life. Laws of biogenesis, degeneration, and environment have been treated after this manner, and such treatment has proved eminently helpful to the faith of Christians. It is a service capable of indefinite expansion, and we may carry it out still further by a consideration of the two laws which are taken to explain the evolution of

life on our globe. In this chapter we confine our illustrations to what men of science have called the doctrine of heredity. It is the cumulative or conservative law of creation. We see it operating everywhere in familiar ways ; we can follow it a little way into some of its graver moral issues ; and then we may reach its highest form, as that young and forward thinker, Elihu, recognised it in the words, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life ;" or as Paul read its momentous bearing in profound words about the offence of one involving the race in condemnation and death, and about the obedience of One lifting the race, as its second Head, to justification and eternal life.

I. *The Law of Heredity in the natural world.*

When a man of science elucidates this principle, he points out that each plant or animal produces others of like kind with itself. The cone of a fir-tree does not produce a beech or an oak, nor does the egg of a fish produce a serpent. Within definite and fixed limits does the law work. Nature does not infinitely disport herself here, or allow differences to upset her arrangement of likeness of kind. Instead of differences advancing to something new, we see a constant return of

differences into the old. The breeder knows that, do as he will, his breeds will, as soon as they are left alone, turn back to what they were at first. This likeness of kind consists, first of all, in a sameness of general structure, and then in a repetition of individual peculiarities. Without going so far back into the permanent structure of organic life, and its reproduction in such exact forms, we can see the law variously at work in the transmission of aptitudes and habits that belong to animal life. The student of biology tells us that the instincts of the lower creatures, such as bees and ants, are the result of stored-up knowledge, accumulated from observation and experience, and passed on through a long line of descent. When we come to study the aptitudes of man, the same law finds abundant illustrations. Certain capacities of workmanship have been acquired ages ago, and continue to be the peculiar heritage of the people that have cultivated them. There were in Egypt, and there are still in India and the East, hereditary castes of craftsmen who, by repetition continued through ages, become or still are, in certain patterns, faultless workmen, acquiring an instinctive aptitude for their work. The enameller of India will hand you a bit of enamel as brightly

green as the emerald, or as fiery red as the ruby ; the bird-painter of Japan will draw you bird-attitudes and all the phenomena of flight with a skill simply unrivalled. Such artistic capacity has run in the blood for generations till those who have acquired it possess an instinct for it, and can show it, when nearly sleeping, as accurately as when awake. Proofs of the hereditary transmission of tendencies to special movements are numerous, and may be frequently observed. Gestures, often peculiar to individuals, and tricks, involuntary with many persons, have been repeated in successive generations under circumstances that forbid the idea of their having been learned by imitation. "On what a curious combination of corporeal structure, mental character, and training," says Darwin, "must *handwriting* depend ! Yet every one must have noted the occasional close similarity of the handwriting in father and son, although the father had not taught the son." It is said that Lord Brougham's handwriting bore a close resemblance not to his father's, but to his grandfather's, whose style had never been seen till his own was formed. Biologists tell us that large hands are inherited by men and women whose ancestors spent laborious lives, and that small hands are possessed

by those whose descent, for many generations, has been from ancestors unused to manual toil. It is observed that not only are forms of structure, but slight differences among them, bequeathed from generation to generation. Peculiarities, even of a microscopic kind, are transmissible by inheritance. The fact is likewise proved, as Brougham's handwriting shows, that a person is capable of transmitting ancestral peculiarities to his children, though they have not achieved development in himself. It would seem as if everything that reached us from our ancestors must have been infixed somewhere within our organisation, packed into cells or germs which the native eye could never search out; and though these ancestral peculiarities do not come to the surface in our own bodily structure, they will be bequeathed to one or more of our descendants. This reappearance in offspring of traits not borne by parents, but by grandparents or remoter ancestors, is an exemplification of the law of heredity which can be proved by many evidences. In the picture galleries of old families, or in the monumental brasses of churches, may be often seen types of features that are still, from time to time, reproduced in members of these families. Such repetition extends to features so slight as a



cast of the eye, or a gesture of the hand, or a habit of walking. Peculiarities of mind and temper appear and reappear in families. It is matter of common remark that some constitutional diseases, both physical and mental, are certainly and conspicuously hereditary. Many illustrations of *functional heredity* could be adduced. Why is this man rich? Because his father was active, honest, laborious, and frugal; the father practised these virtues, transmitted them, and the son reaps their reward. Why is that other man feeble, suffering, and unhappy? Because his father, gifted with a powerful constitution, abused it by debauchery and intemperance. Propensities to drink, to gambling, and to improvidence appear to run in the blood from sire to son. One observes the frequent production, by highly endowed men, of men still more highly endowed with the same talents. Darwin, who had excessive faith in heredity, delighted to trace his qualities back through several generations of his forebears. His grandfather, the celebrated author of the *Zoonomia*, and others of his ancestors, showed a great liking for natural history, and doubtless the qualities of a naturalist had become inherent in the strain. So it has been in regard to the gift of



music. Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven were all sons of men that had unusual musical powers. To tell the truth, there is not a man on earth whose condition has not been determined by myriads of facts and forces with which the determination of his own will had nothing to do. And this law of heredity extends to *the formation of moral character*. Bad traits descend to the third and fourth generation; to the third and fourth generation good traits also descend. The law is a sword with two edges, and the hilt is in a sure and mighty Hand. It belongs to virtue as much as to vice. There is an Ebal as well as a Gerizim in the government of the world. The law of heredity publishes alike the blessing and the curse. It does not explain, but it verifies and confirms a doctrine of Scripture, which is as truly a fact of human experience as it is a doctrine of Scripture, namely, the principle of evil in the hearts of all, the doctrine of original sin. Whence comes this evil power? From an act of humanity, of which we are all members, an act which has corrupted human nature as it exists in each of us. This doctrine gives great offence to superficial minds, but never to that profound common sense which is the expression of reason and the judge

of truth. The human race is bound together, and forms a mysterious but real unity, so that the taint which entered it at its fountain-head extends to each and all. Look at it in the light of the great law of heredity, and you see that one man suffers for the faults of another, or he enjoys the advantages resulting from the good actions of others. Because this law presses so heavily on its evil side, some are disposed to argue that man is the creature of circumstances, that his character has been formed for him, that a law of necessity holds him down, that accountability is impossible, and retribution a dream. As one has said, "I feel that I am as completely the result of my nature, and impelled to do what I do, as the needle to point to the north, or the puppet to move according as the string is pulled." Such is the strongest argument of modern fatalism; but it pushes the law of heredity too far, and the simple rejoinder is enough that every man has consciously a free-will power that makes him a real agent in the affairs of his existence, and a conscience that writes the statute of retribution plainly on the walls of his innermost being. The crown and glory of our nature and its loftiest distinction from the brute is, that we can elevate ourselves, resist

inherited taints, improve our best faculties, form increasingly noble habits, and, by the exercise of self-discipline, mount high above our original selves. If the law of heredity brings hardship and pain, who does not see that its terrific gravity, instead of being an injustice, is a proclamation to every man at once to set about instituting a reform? The hope of self-change is never relinquished by any human being, except he be an incurable trifler or a vice-besotted wretch. Is he so poor a creature that he cannot fight against the foes of his purity and peace? If it be true of civil liberty,

“Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow,”

then let him strike the blow for freedom, and not lie down in sin like a moral dastard or degenerate enervated sot.

## II. *The Law of Heredity in the spiritual world.*

Our inquiry prepares us to look at our highest origin. “We have an ancestry which goes back beyond maternity, beyond the flesh, beyond nature. We have a pedigree which is older than the mountains, older than the stars, older than the universe.” Oliver Wendell Holmes, giving expression to this law of heredity, says that most

people think that any difficulty of a physical kind can be cured if a physician be called early enough. "Yes," he replies, "but early enough would commonly be two hundred years in advance." Just as a fir-tree may be said to have existed in germ a thousand or ten thousand years ago, at the origin of its species, so every man, before his personal appearing, existed in humanity. You are twenty-two years old, thirty-five, or sixty. That is your age as an individual, but as man it is the age of humanity, so that you are all much older than you think, for you are as old as the first man. But we have a still older and higher descent—older and higher than the stars. "We are come from a good stock; we are branches of a high family tree; we are scions of a noble house, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "The Spirit of God has made us, and the breath of the Almighty has given us life." Calvin and the theologians trace our origin to the first Adam, tell us that we fell with him, and inherit from him a corrupt nature, and declare our nature to be totally depraved. And they leave us there. But the truth is only half told, and a part of the truth which most of all crushes hope out of us. Now, Scripture attests that, however sinful and corrupt

we may be, still we have a splendid origin. The Gospels trace our genealogy up not only to Adam, but far beyond, when they say that he was the son of God. Christ sets forth in the parable of the Prodigal Son that man, the sinner, away in the far country, is still God's child, and that visions of the Fatherhood which came to him there, induced him to arise and return to the home where all things good and true in plenty were to be found. Paul, the apostle, when addressing the men of Athens on Mars' Hill, quoted one of their own poets, who said, "For we are also the offspring of God." We *have* a corrupt nature, as the law of heredity too clearly proves; but that doctrine should be relieved by the other statement, that there is in each and all of us a nature spiritual and divine. A single sentence of Pascal's puts the whole truth regarding man: "There are two natures in us, one good, the other bad." It is the teaching of Paul: "That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." The admission of a twofold nature in man runs through all literature. Not to multiply quotations, let me appeal directly to your own experience. Who does not know the contest as well as the self-accusation that forces out of him

the confession : "There is another man within me, that's angry with me, rebukes, commands, and dastards me"? It is the man of God's creation, the better nature whose lineage is from above, and shows itself, at the opening of life, in dreams of purity, love, and heaven. We *are* children of the flesh, and the flesh is weak; but we have also an origin from God, who is the Father of our spirits. The higher message which comes to us in the words of Elihu, and above all in the doctrine and life of Jesus is this : "The Spirit of God has made us, and the breath of the Almighty is our life." God is a Spirit, and man is a spirit too. Therefore the spirit is the precious part of us. Man *is* a spirit, and has a body frail and perishing, to be valued only for the protection and education which the spirit may gain by it. Now, by this fresh concept of God and clear revelation of man, Christ seeks our regenerated life, when He says, "How much better is a man than a sheep!" He penetrates our nature to its core, speaks of its heavenly origin, and lays bare its unspeakable possibilities, as the offspring of the eternal Father, and capable of vast moral issues, as the heir of immortality, and the object of infinite love. It is here that Christ's gospel wins, for it says to us : "You are

a part of God, your nature has no meaning but in a discovery of this truth. You have no place in this world but in relation to Him. The full relationship can only be realised by receiving Christ. 'To as many as receive Him, to them gives He power to become the sons of God.'" Science, with its law of heredity, sends the weakest to the wall; but Jesus speaks to them with pity and hope, and begins in them His everlasting redemption. He does so by assuring them that the movements of a better nature within are voices of the Spirit of God yet unhushed by sin, traces of a heavenly origin yet unobliterated by the wastes and woes of an evil life.

It is true that the law of heredity has brought a sad entail of evil upon us, not only as individuals but as members of the human race. We are all involved in the first man's transgression; we inherit depravity, helplessness, condemnation, and death, as being under a law of hereditary evil. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." That source of inheritance we all know; but if in Adam there descends to us a dire entail of evil, wrath, and death, in Christ we have a bequeathment of grace, justification, and life. "The sin of Adam is more than outweighed in its influ-



ence over us by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The new pulse of life from the cross is mightier than the tide of tainted life that comes to us from the foot of the forbidden tree. The transfusion of grace prevails over that of corruption. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.”<sup>1</sup>

Hereditary taints of character, and the disabilities of original sin which make self-effort and self-conquest so hopeless, can only be overcome by the new vital forces which descend to us from the second and stronger Head of the race. “The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” He unites Himself to us by His Spirit, and thus quickens possibilities of better moral life in our nature, which transmitted evil may suppress but cannot extinguish, because our nature originally transcends the first Adam, and comes from God. The work of the second Adam knits anew the ties which relate us to God, restores the balance of moral forces disturbed by the inheritance of evil, reinforces us with the strength of holiness, and turns the great law of heredity to secure for us “the power of an endless life.”

Have you hitherto shut your ears to this higher

<sup>1</sup> “Heredity and its Evangelical Analogies;” *The Expositor*, October 1889.

message? Do so no more, but listen to the witnesses in your own nature of your divine descent, as well as in the gospel of Christ. The Spirit of God has made you, and the breath of the Almighty is your life. Realise this truth, and it will be the day of your adoption. If you would see the Father hastening to meet you, learn first to say within yourself, "I will arise and go to my Father." He runs to meet your separation and want; O run to meet His love. He waits till you are dissatisfied with the swine husks, till you are weary of the riotous living, and then He flies to greet you with the ring and the robe. Realise this your high lineage, and live by it from day to day. "The Spirit of God entered into me, and set me on my feet," says the prophet. Yes; the Spirit of God causes us to stand upright by impressing us with the dignity of our high pedigree, and sets us on our feet by making us most conscious of our own responsibility, most alive to our own deathless greatness. There is nothing to be proud of in any ancestry which is not *in* us. If our lineage is of any value, that which descends to us must be not something dead and gone, not a well-preserved mummy, but something that lives in us and attests itself by present qualities. Have

we within ourselves the qualities that are begotten by the breath of the Almighty? Can we point to aught in our being that makes us kindred with God in holy affections and like purposes? Have we moments of faith and aspiration, love and prayer? Then the Spirit of God is making us new creatures, and the breath of the Almighty is expanding and filling our life.

Some practical application of the subject may be made by reading our duty in the light of this law of heredity.

There is a light of solemn interest *for parents*.

They transmit peculiarities of thought and habit to their offspring, even from before birth, and still more as the result of early home training. Our lives, though our own, are something of the lives of all those that have taken care of us, as theirs were of the lives that took care of them, and as the lives of whole generations were of those of preceding eras. We are the receptacle of a history which has come down to us through thousands of years. We cannot tell what part came to us, and what part was developed in us; but it is there. There may be a long distance between the seed and the harvest, but the harvest is the child of the seed. And parents are the sowers of seed, as

none else can be. The things we do for the interior life of a child are lost from sight and forgotten; but they remain as active forces along with others, and go on acting clear down to the very end of the child's life. It is dangerous to infuse malign influences into a child's life, but glorious to introduce elements of truth, purity, and love; to be in a true sense, an organ of the Spirit of God to the child. Those elements may seem to vanish for a score of years; they are latent. A thousand times they come back. In the last years of life, when he has wrestled with adversity and conquered, it will be found that, after all, the threads that were put in by a mother's love and a father's prayers have not broken, and the fabric retains them to the very end. Therefore, fathers, "Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Continue the good old custom of family worship, for that is a daily recognition at home of the truth that the Spirit of God has made us, and the breath of the Almighty is our life.

There is a light of tender interest *for children*.

Evil can be transmitted, and so can good. It is dreadful to be afflicted with any hereditary weakness, whether of mind or morals. Children who

inherit the craving for drink have more temptation to follow, and less power to avoid, the course of their parents, than the children of the temperate. When children are born with appetites fatally strong in their nature, they are sorely handicapped in the struggle to be virtuous. As they grow up, the appetite is apt to grow with them, and speedily becomes a master, and the master a tyrant. One who went through that experience tells that for eight-and-twenty years the soul within him had to stand, like an unsleeping sentinel, guarding the appetite for strong drink. To be a man at last under such a disadvantage, not to say a saint, is as great a triumph of virtue as it is a fine trophy of grace. I have read of a woman, a prisoner in Glasgow gaol, to whom fifty thieves and dissolute women owed their descent. That is not a pedigree which any one would choose to have.

Every one is proud of a good ancestry, of an ancestry whose characteristic is goodness. Our life is always the breath of the spirit that made us; the traits of the fathers reappear in the children. If our fathers and mothers have left us the legacy of a true and good life, then how much we owe them, and how tenderly they remind us that we should carry forward the traditions of

their prayers and examples to yet higher levels ! One often sees the law made luminous—" Instead of the fathers, the children ;" and it is a beautiful sight. Here is a man who lives in his town like an inspiration for honesty, purity, and charity, in whose life burns still the fire of another strong true man who was his father, and who passed out of men's sight a score of years ago. Men call the father dead, but he is no more dead than the torch has gone out which lighted the beacon blazing on the hill. It is blessed to come of a good stock. Thrice happy is the church or town whose sons perpetuate memories of such ancestral worth !

There is a light of hopeful interest *for all who realise their divine descent.*

The premonition of our future is the voice of our past ; the promise of our destiny is the echo of our origin. If we have moments on the Mount, we shall get glimpses of the Promised Land. Hours of communion in this life are a prophecy of perfect communion in the life to come. We cannot rise too high for our source. " Like trailing clouds of glory," sings the poet Wordsworth, in his " Ode to Immortality," we come from God our home, and we shall go to God because we have come from Him.

The hope of everlastingness also springs from

the law of heredity. The good which benefactors have transmitted to us shall be recognised and rejoiced over together in a higher world. Good thoughts that have come to us from parents, or which we have got from teachers like Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, and Jeremy Taylor, are legacies for which we shall yet one day have an opportunity to thank the testators. One man sows, another reaps, and they shall rejoice together. The land of rejoicing is above and beyond. There meet those who were helpers of each other on earth, and their works do follow them. In the great invisible to which we go, we shall find ten thousand strings which we have made musical, and they shall vibrate through the whole universe for ever. Let us then attune our hearts and lives to the exceeding greatness of God's love towards us, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."



V.

*THE GOSPEL AND SCIENCE—THE  
LAW OF VARIATION.*

No special theory of evolution yet advanced can be said to be free from criticism, or to be fully established, though agreement is nearly universal that some form of evolution must be accepted as accounting for the course of nature. Anything like complete proof of this doctrine of science cannot be adduced, and anything like direct experimental proof, we may venture to say, will never be found; but yet a kind of proof, felt to be most convincing, continues to be met with in every department of human inquiry. Evolution of some kind, and according to some law, is a doctrine recognised almost everywhere by those who have learned to observe and think. And the principle is not confined to the forms of plant and animal, for it is believed to be equally active in the inorganic world, and in the world of human thought and action. Most of our scientists are agreed that life has arisen

from preceding life, and that this process has gone on through long ages under the operation of two laws—the laws of descent and variation. Every one has observed that like begets like, that forms of structure, features of expression, and aptitudes of different kinds, are transmitted from generation to generation. It is also patent to every observer that nature shows a disposition to leave the beaten path; that life, while keeping strictly within the line of descent, has a tendency to depart from it. This is what men of science call the Law of Variation. We cannot gainsay the fact that individual differs from individual, and that no two individuals are perfectly alike. It is admitted on all hands that descent and variation are processes at work, and that every new unveiling of nature shows these processes to play a great part amid the interactions of energies that make up our world. The law of descent runs deep into the plan of life, and none know this so well as they who have seen how any change from the line of descent tends to revert; and yet the further investigation goes, it must be allowed that the production of forms of variation is well nigh endless. So far men are generally at one; but when we ask how it is that offspring is both so like, and yet so unlike, parents, the

attempts to explain it are numerous and conflicting. For we must remember, in dealing with such a subject, how endlessly complex is the organic world, how little we know of the causes and modes of variation, of the influences that modify the action of selection. No answer can be held as satisfactory which finds this process of differences to be an affair of sport, such as “extraordinary births,” a thing of chance or accident. If a breeder needs all his skill, contrivance, and perseverance to produce a variety, and if, with all, he cannot turn out a new species, surely skill beyond conception must have presided over an accumulation of differences that has resulted in the production of such an organism as man. Accidental modification cannot explain it; there must have been an organising cause.

I. *The Law of Variation in the natural world.*

The apostle points to a manifest illustration of this law, in what our eyes see above our heads: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.” Since the telescope has been applied to the investigation of the heavens, those differences have been made still more manifest. The milky way has been

resolved into countless myriads of stars ; crowds of double and triple stars have been discovered ; planets of varying size and lustre sweep at varying orbits round the sun. Imagination fails to conceive what strangely diversified conditions of life exist in those remote spheres. Voltaire points one of his severest gibes at human nature in the fable which transfers an inhabitant of one of the larger planets to our earth, and sets him to talking with one of our race, who is greatly elated at the thought of his immense knowledge. " We have only sixty senses," grumbles this visitor from Saturn, and so he quite puts to confusion the tiny inhabitant of earth, who is forced to confess that he has only five. The fable suggests what teeming varieties of evolution may people the spaces of heaven.

The apostle still further illustrates the law of variation by pointing out differences of organic life on earth : " All flesh is not the same flesh ; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." What the apostle noted here as a fact in the natural world, and made use of to illustrate what shall hold in the world of resurrection, has been lifted into a great law to account for the progress of life on our globe. *The Variation of Plants and*

*Animals under Domestication*, is the title of one of Darwin's principal works, and it aims at giving us a clue to the method or law of organic advance from the time that life first appeared on the earth. It has been a course of evolution from lower to higher forms till the plan of life reaches its apex and crown in the fair human form. Organic beings possess an inherent tendency to vary. Life, as we now know, is a most plastic element, and moves towards wonderful changes. If this were not so, man could do nothing to produce varieties, but we know how much he can do in this direction with cultivated plants and domesticated animals. When he grows them in different soils, scarcely a plant can be named, though cultivated in the crudest manner, which has not given birth to several varieties.

And so among the advancing forms of living nature that have arisen during the many changes through which our earth has gone, a law of variation has ever been at work to prevent a mere repetition of the past, and so secure that

“No compound of this earthly ball  
Be like another all in all.”

When beneficial variations arise, the struggle for existence determines that those variations, however slight, which are favourable, shall be selected

or preserved. The preservation has been called Natural Selection by Darwin, or the Survival of the Fittest by Herbert Spencer. It is the common and widely ranging or dominant species which most frequently vary, and include the largest number of flourishing varieties. When variations that are advantageous have occurred, they become inherited ; and so the law of heredity comes in to preserve them.

That it is a law of nature for plants and animals thus to vary and differ from one another, take a few proofs. When an organism varies in any manner, it will vary again in the same manner. If a gardener observes one or two additional petals in a flower, he feels confident that in a few generations he will be able to raise a double flower, crowded with petals. A farmer experienced in raising new kinds of wheat knows that a good variety may safely be regarded as the forerunner of a better one. Observe how minutely the tendency to differ exists. It is told of a gardener that he could distinguish a hundred and fifty kinds of camellia, and an old Dutch florist kept above twelve hundred varieties of the hyacinth, and knew each variety by the bulb alone. Several breeds of dogs are respectively characterised by different

instincts. Among the varieties which have spontaneously arisen from time to time, we have the fleetness of the greyhound, the brute strength of the mastiff, the fine scent of the pointer, and the sagacity of the shepherd's dog. Yet all these varieties must have originally belonged to the same stock. Linnaeus says that the Laplanders, by long practice, know and give a name to each reindeer, and that he could no more distinguish one from another than he could distinguish ants on an ant-hill. But ask eminent naturalists, and they will tell you that each ant knows its fellows of the same community. No two individuals in plant or animal are identically the same. No two germs or seeds, not even two leaves on the same tree, are precisely alike. All wild animals recognise each other, which shows there must be some difference between them. When the eye is well trained, the shepherd knows each sheep, and man is able to distinguish a fellowman out of millions on millions of other men. Now, this brings us to consider—

## II. *The Law of Variation in the spiritual world.*

Variability may be said to be as much an aboriginal law as growth or inheritance. Some think that variation and heredity are equal and antagonistic principles. By the great teachers of



science they are regarded as the two chief factors in the development of organic nature. When we ask, however, why organic beings tend to vary, those teachers give somewhat obscure and unsatisfactory replies. Darwin seems to think that variation is accidental, depending on the nature of changed conditions, in a word on environment, yet he is constrained to admit that it depends to a far greater degree on the nature or constitution of the organism. Others speak of it as an "internal tendency," but that phrase explains nothing. Some, like Huxley, say that it is caused by the active efforts of animals in upward directions; they introduce the theory of spasmodic rise (*nisus*) as an aid to gradual process, which differs little from the idea of creation. All these guesses only show that an explanation of life must be sought in a region which science cannot explore, unless led into it by the hand of faith and religion. The law of variation takes us to the borders of the spiritual world; nay, it is a method or process working upon nature from the spiritual world. We speak of natural law in the spiritual world, that is, as reaching up into, and at work in, the spiritual world; but the truth rather seems to be that natural law is just the spiritual world, not

only above nature, but behind it, and under it, and in it. This innate tendency to vary is the power of God helping the organism to rise, “always developing nature to a capacity to be receptive of higher powers. Under the tension of the divine energy in it, it always seems to be ‘stirring its bounds to overpass’—always aspiring to return to the spiritual whence it came.” In man the highest evolutionary stage of the physical has been reached, and the spiritual begins. The effort of nature seems to have been to produce a person, and having done this, to rest from its labours. As the highest product and last outcome of nature, man is a person—one who has intellect, feeling, and will, who has the attributes of self-consciousness, freedom, and moral obligation, who knows himself distinct from creation, though bound to it by a thousand ties, yet so separate from it that he can rise above it and look beyond it. If there is to be further evolution, it will not be material but spiritual, because man is the image of God, as near and like to God as a created being can be. If an end of physical variation has been reached, yet the law works in that true spiritual world to which man has been elevated by his endowments of thought and will.

As the end and at the head of creation, man has in himself the whole history of creation : the entire past is summed up in him, and the whole process of evolving nature is repeated in him once more as a free moral agent. Heredity preserves and strives to fix the past, while the moral within him, and the spiritual environment made for him, stimulate him to rise into that divine life of which he has become conscious. When we come to man, we find the principle of variation in full play. No two faces are exactly alike ; no two minds are precisely similar. Nature signally endows men with special faculties. One man is fitted to excel in some one direction, and another in another ; and so the law works indefinitely. We must admit the principle of speciality in human nature, and understand that healthful development consists in the free activity of each individual, according to his special gifts and capacities, directed in such a way as to respect and promote the healthful activity of society in general. The tendency of religion, of the new life in Christ, is to widen immensely the range of this law of variation. In the highest life of man the law has its utmost freedom and scopefulness. Each man's true and proper personality is not only preserved but is

best secured in the Christian life; it is to be cultivated in the sphere of redeeming and regenerating love. For grace does not obliterate or set aside, but take up and transfigure the characteristic elements of our nature. It may be said that the fact of each man's separate individuality is the one thing which the Spirit of God seeks to awake, educe, and glorify. Mark the infinite depth and richness of the new life which Christ hath brought into the world, manifesting itself as it does with an endless variety of forms in the lives of men. As the Christian is the highest type of man, it is for him to develop most fully this tendency to individuation, which Coleridge calls the true idea of life.

Religion is the consciousness of individual union with God in Christ; it is the conviction of personal life which has in it the presentiment that "every one of us shall give account of himself unto God." The aim of Christ in His gospel is to secure and perfect the originality of each man, to elicit and strengthen his distinct gifts. "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Every peculiarity of gift or grace, of talent or taste, is to be preserved and developed and exercised. The distinctive person-

ality ought, therefore, to be unfolded in a new fresh way, and into a fresh new life. The Christian being the highest type of man, it is manifest that he should exhibit a richer diversity of life, according to the law that variation differentiates as the forms of life ascend. Full scope should be given to the various powers of our nature ; characteristic differences should be acted out ; every man should dare to be original. It has been too much the fault of theology and religion to overlook or forget the free course of variation in the development of character. They have been a kind of Procrustes' bed on which to crush and mutilate, instead of helping to educe and strengthen the powers of human nature. We need the scopefulness of individuality to be sacredly guarded, for its slightest forfeiture trenches on the fulness and freeness of life in Christ. That life, when unimpeded, casts itself up into new and numberless varieties of mind and action. It bids you think for yourselves, and take none of your knowledge, especially in divine things, at second hand. It bids you speak as of yourselves, and put the ring of reality into your speech, so that all men hearing you shall say, "Here is something more than an echo, here is an original voice. Here

is something more than sounding brass, here is downright sincerity." It bids you act for yourselves, and lead a simple, unconventional life, in which you shall make it appear that fashion, custom, policy, are nothing to you in comparison with purity of motive and integrity of conduct.

Such individuality becomes a thing of power. A certain solidity of merit, that has nothing to do with by-ends, belongs to it; men feel its right, and do it homage. They who possess it are the men who score their mark deep into society; they are the men who redeem it from a dull, dead uniformity. In this principle we find the sacredness of the rights of conscience. Our British liberty—is it not the offspring of this natural prerogative? Our Protestantism—is it not the assertion of individuality? Our Nonconformity—is it not the maintenance of immovable conviction in the face of established privilege?

This sacredness of the individual man, this claim to be himself, we owe to the grace of God and the gospel of Christ.

The grace of God is like the sunshine which floods the universe, yet mirrors itself in a thousand various forms. The love of Christ passes knowledge, but it seeks to be reflected

in an infinite diversity of human souls. A man will never be himself until he has found Christ, and got Him to set free the spirit that is in us; he will never become a power until God has become all in him; he will never really live till he has begun to live in Him. Let us come to Christ as we are, just with the individuality that is our own, and He will redeem it from evil and crown it with His love. To be as we are, as God has made us, and Christ redeems us, and the Spirit new creates us,—that is the whole of the Christian life. Let us give full scope to our original God-given powers; dare to be ourselves out and out; think, speak, and act as of ourselves, with this one proviso, that Christ be to us and in us, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. So will our individuality be clearly defined, and become a thing of power. We shall be everything when Christ shall be all—His love constraining us.

One or two lessons may be learned from the working of the law of variation both in natural and spiritual life.

And first, the working of this law leads to *inequality*.

Any one who ponders the subject will quickly perceive that inequality is the mainspring of



evolution. It is found to be the result of the slow progress of life from lower to higher forms, under the laws of descent and variation and natural selection, which decree that the race shall be to the swift and the battle to the strong, and that the weak shall be swept from the field. Part of the working of the law is, that the higher the scope for development, the greater the differentiation. Given two cabinet ministers and two colliers, and the chances are that the former will differ more widely from one another than the latter. The flora of lands where sun and soil are kind is more varied than in regions of rock and snow. And so this process of variation causes inequality of gifts and conditions everywhere. The cry of the socialist is, "Down with all inequalities; abolish wealth and capital; level social distinctions;" but it is all in vain. He cannot prevent or check the law of variability; it has wrought too long, and works too deep for any man, or body of men, to resist it. There will be capitalists and poor men in the world, so long as the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong. Equalise conditions more and more by all means, but never lose sight of the truth that the efficiency of character is more important than change of conditions. The best

soil will not clothe thorns with grapes, nor will the holiest atmosphere make the bad heart good. The victory of resolute men over abject poverty and social hardship is the glory of the human past and the bright prophecy of its future.

Again, the working of this law *counteracts the working of heredity*.

To some men the thought of hereditary taints and vices becomes oppressive. It lies upon them like a nightmare, and fills them with a kind of pessimistic despair. But no man is left to be the victim of the law of heredity. There is a self-assertion and independence in the human will which refutes the one-sided philosophy, that man's character is made for him and not by him. We do not need to look only to those who, born in the obscurest position, have seized honour and power, but multitudes whose names are unknown have made circumstances playthings in their hands. How often do you find the sober youth come out of a drunken home! How often does virtue issue from the very den of vice, and children exhibit qualities the very opposite of those which their birth and training might have been supposed to produce!

Have you sometimes been overwhelmed by

thinking on the sad entail of ancestors? If the conviction that we and all that surrounds us have been so largely determined by the past weighs on us with tyrannous power, the thought that we in our turn are shaping the destinies of future generations should become a motive of almost irresistible force, compelling us to high resolve and dutiful action.

Again, the working of this law affords *encouragement to strenuous effort*.

In the formation of a moral purpose, as of a drunkard to abstain from liquor, something more is needed. Everything may predispose to indulgence. The inveterate habit, both in mind and frame, may be dragging its victim downwards; but just as science asserts that the striving of the creature has led to organic change, and to a higher coigne of vantage in the battle of life, through the working of some power behind nature, so in like manner the struggle upwards of the human will is sure to meet with response from Him who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." We need the whole world to stand on, and all truth to support us; and we have it here. Nature joins with Scripture to assure us that grace

to help in time of need will not be withheld. Let the appetites and passions of the beast that are in us be kept down by our striving after the spiritual nature : let us not sink backward into brute conditions, but rise into the divine life that opens a path from lower to higher being, and paves the way between this world and the next.

Lastly, the working of this law *shapes our future destiny*.

When the apostle says that one star differs from another star in glory, he uses the illustration to set forth new adaptations and varieties in the life of a pure and redeemed and glorified humanity. "There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial ; there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Life in heaven, life in the resurrection, does not merge the individuality of any one, whether in soul or body. The personal life will not be absorbed and overshadowed in the life of the Infinite One. If our personality is to melt into the being of God, then surely God will not be our life but our annihilation. He can say no longer of us, "Because I live, ye shall live also." That would be death indeed. God's universal life will not destroy the old varieties of being, but pulsate through them in ever augmenting degrees of bliss.

We sometimes sing of losing ourselves in the ocean of His love, but this is only poetically true. Love is an ocean where no man permanently loses himself, but regains himself in richer, nobler form. God's glory will only give us back our life, that we may keep it unto life eternal.

Let us not misread the destiny of our being. Though God is to be all, yet He is to be all *in* all. Separate being is still being preserved. Whatever possibilities of life, Christian believer, stretch on before thee in the eternal future, thou shalt be *thyself, the same*, differing from every other in glory, though advancing in glory for ever and ever.

## VI.

### *THE GOSPEL AND POSITIVISM.*

THE system of thought known by the name of Positivism, owes its existence to an eminent French philosopher, Auguste Comte. He was born in 1797, and at an early age, like Bacon and Locke, the age of fourteen, when he was at college, the reforming spirit began to move him, and he felt the need of applying the scientific method to the resolution of vital and social problems. He taught mathematics both in private and at one of the public schools in Paris, while he devoted his leisure to scientific study and the slow development of his philosophy. It was his lot, as it is the lot generally of original and honest minds, to be persecuted, and the story of his persecutions is told in the sixth volume of his chief work, the *Course of Positive Philosophy*. At the age of fifty-seven he was thrown upon the world, and had no other help than what a few admirers collected

for him. In his forty-fifth year he came under the influence of a remarkable woman, a new influence which for one blissful year penetrated him like sunshine, and changed his life. "He learned to appreciate the abiding and universal influence of the affections. He gained a new glimpse into man's destiny. He aspired to become the founder of a new religion, the Religion of Humanity." The Polity of Comte was the outcome of that influence. He grew more and more religious both in temper and habit, though in a sense not very intelligible to the popular mind, but he made his only reading for years *The Divine Comedy* and *The Imitation of Christ*. Night and morning he spent an hour in prayer, and passed one afternoon of every week in meditation in church, and in silent communion with his loved and lost, "with the full assurance that happiness, like duty, is to be found only in the more perfect surrender of self to the great Being, in whom the universal order is transfigured, and the wise will strive ever to devote their lives more truly to its service. Man's prudence and energy, with all their resources, only bring out more fully man's dependence; so that they force him to seek outside of himself the sole foundations by which he can give stability to his life." Behind this



form of sound words Comte places a great rival to Christianity, a strange substitute for God. Positivism, or the Religion of Humanity, is one of the best-known substitutes for the gospel of Christ.

The writings of Comte are voluminous and elaborate. Sir Fitzjames Stephen declared once that life was too short to read Comte. Sir William Hamilton expressed, forty years ago, his surprise that the French thinker should be taken up in this country when being given up in his own; but the truth is that his disciples have increased in both countries, and his system of thought has gained more or less the adhesion of eminent men everywhere. Ardent disciples, like the late Professor Clifford and Cotter Morrison, assign him a place among the foremost thinkers of the race, and claim for him the distinction of being the founder of a new religion, and of the modern science of Sociology. Leaders of thought, like George Lewes and John Stuart Mill, have paid him the honour of translating and expounding his works. As Hegel says, "It is only a great man that condemns us to the task of explaining him." The same kind of homage has been rendered by Professor Edward Caird in his book on *The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte*. Herbert

Spencer is his great antagonist, and yet he says of Comte : "True or untire, his system as a whole has doubtless produced important and salutary revolutions of thought in many minds, and will doubtless do so in many more. . . . The presentation of scientific knowledge and method as a whole, whether rightly or wrongly co-ordinated, cannot have failed greatly to widen the conception of most of his readers. And he has done special service by familiarizing men with the idea of a social science based on other sciences." It is admitted by all who have studied Comte, that he has done more than any other thinker towards a classification of the sciences, towards an organisation of the definitely established knowledge of science into a coherent body of doctrine, and towards a better reconstruction of society. It is admitted by all that the faculties which form the chief distinction of human nature—the faculties of abstraction and construction—were imperial in the working of his mind. He had an organising genius like that of Aquinas, who conceived of theology as the master-science of life, or like that of Bacon, who was the first to form that vast idea of philosophy as an organic whole to be verified by the methods of science. And his work of recon-

struction in philosophy and science and social order is so comprehensive, that the builders of many methods will be indebted to him for a large measure of their material.

At present, however, we are mainly concerned with positivism in its religious, moral, and social bearings, and shall pass into the heart of the system by noticing briefly what Comte calls the "law of the three stages," and what he considers to be the fundamental law of human evolution. History, he maintains, reveals three distinct stages, the theological or supernatural, the metaphysical, and the positive. He regards the theological as the earliest or crudest, and the positive as the last and fullest explanation of God, man, and the universe. In the theological stage man reads all phenomena as originated by personal wills or agents, and ascribes to them his own attributes. Here, again, three successive stages are to be noted: fetishism, in which every phenomenon is endowed with its own will; polytheism, in which groups of phenomena are controlled by superior powers; and monotheism, which is conceived when the idea of a universe has been formed, and a personal will is thought to be the first cause of all things. Such, Comte teaches, is the course of the mind in its

first stage. The metaphysical, or second stage, explains phenomena by looking beyond them to some entity or principle, whose modes of action were regarded as invariable. Any intervention of external beings or gods was denied, and inherent essences and powers were conceived as dominating the constant succession of things. In this intermediate phase of critical thought it becomes apparent that such entities are pure abstractions, the negative character of which would show itself to closer inquiry. They were simply the negation of the gods whose places they took—abstract spectres occupying the field when the play of superhuman will had been dethroned. The recognition of invariableness in phenomena was, however, the germ of science in this second stage; it was an imperfect scientific inquiry, conducted by the aid of the subjective method bequeathed from the theological stage. It created abstractions which had no positive content of their own, yet seemed to be positive principles taking the place of the beliefs they discarded. The essences of the schoolmen were the product of this speculative inquiry; the same method of explanation has gone on into every department of human knowledge. The last substantial abstraction, therefore, which

is put in the place of divine powers is nature. And nature is only a name for the general course of things, though it is regarded by metaphysics as existing apart from and controlling them. The third or final stage, in reference to which, according to Comte, the other two are transitory, is the positive state, which adheres simply to constancies of succession and co-existence, treats them as the laws of nature, and recognises them alone as the sum-total of human inquiry. Beyond the laws which regulate phenomena, it is idle to penetrate. According to this formula, human intelligence necessarily passes in its growth through three stages, and men's conceptions of the world begin by being theological and end by being positive. Phenomena are at first interpreted by men in the terms of their own consciousness, next by the substitution of abstract figments for a supernatural agent, and then finally by attention solely to the phenomena themselves. These are reduced to laws. Search after causes is abjured, pretension to absolute knowledge is set aside, and the discovery of laws is declared to be the only object of research. Here, then, let us note the first great feature of positivism. As a general scheme of thought, on its negative side, it refuses all belief in anything

beyond phenomena, and the laws connected with them; it holds an attitude of hostility to the supernatural; it seeks to drive theology and metaphysics from the whole sphere of knowledge, and concentrate human thought within the limits of science. The long attempt of reason to penetrate the absolute must be given up as an idle and unprofitable task.

Now, in answer to all this we simply say that theology and metaphysics refuse to be expelled. Banish them as you will, they are sure to return. It can be shown that the positive method involves a metaphysic, and ends in a theology. The three phases of human progress are fundamental elements of the mind, permanent factors of human intelligence. All knowledge must be theological, metaphysical, and positive. As to this dogmatic nescience of positivism, with regard to the how and why of things, "you may," said Guizot, "interrogate the human race in all time and in all places, in all states of society and in all grades of civilisation, and you will find men everywhere and always believing spontaneously in facts and causes *beyond* the sensible world, *beyond* this ever-operating system called Nature." It is a proof of the greatness of man's mind that he must



transcend the limits of creation. He has a sense of the Infinite, which can never cease to assert itself imperiously. Furthermore, every triumph of genius or goodness in the cause of humanity has been won by those whose life was rooted in a higher faith than that of the positivist. "It is the men who wait in the antechamber with a sense of the great Presence in which they shall render their account and receive their new commission, by whom all great and glorious things have been done for the world, and the highest possibility of the humblest cottage life is conditioned by the same faith." On such grounds we combat the opposition of Comte and his disciples to the supernatural. Although his "law of the three stages" contains much truth, another school of thought, powerful in this country and America, claims a different ending to this progress. If positivism takes no account of anything beyond the immediate content of observed facts, the agnostic school recognise the absolute and infinite power which is manifested in phenomena, and charge positivism, in Spencer's words, with "an avowed ignoring of cause altogether." Comte's positive stage is therefore set aside, and one in which first cause is avowed takes its place. It is held that men began by seeing



volition everywhere, and must end by seeing an inscrutable power everywhere.

But while the agnostic and the positivist differ as to the final term, they differ still more in their attitude towards religion. If religion certainly is the unknowable, and treats of the unknowable only, it is certain that there would soon be no religion, and men would treat it as a thing which they had outgrown. And such is, on the whole, the agnostic position. And if the positivist takes up a still more negative attitude towards the unknowable, what meaning, it may be asked, can the term religion have for him, and what has he to do with it? The strange paradox is, that the conditions and parts of religion have never been so thoroughly conceived before, by theologian or by philosopher, ancient or modern, as by the founder of this new gospel, though he is less reluctant to deny than to affirm the existence of a personal God. Comte has examined, with marvellous completeness, the scope, functions, and elements of religion, and has organised, with still more marvellous genius of construction, the religion he proposes into a system of "majestic symmetry." The fervent positivist does not indulge, like some leaders of thought, in such high-flown phrases as "the relation of man

to the Invisible or Unknowable," or "what the Immensities have to say to us," or the "Eternal Power that makes for righteousness," or the "great heaven-high Unquestionability." Nor is he anxious, like some of our modern divines, to escape out of their own skins, by renouncing the creed they have sworn to defend, and effacing its discipline. Attempts to sublimate religion into a nebulous theosophy, coloured by the Sermon on the Mount, in the interests of something more catholic, more full of sweetness and light, are fashionable, and take in a time of Protestant anarchy like the present. The positivist has learned from his master how weak a thing religion is when made vague and elastic, and from another Catholic church the necessity for a definite and systematic and organised religion. It must have a coherent scheme of doctrines, and an organised code of practice; it must have what all great churches, what men like Calvin, Knox, Hooker, or Wesley understand by it, a creed, a worship, and a government, duly co-ordinated and fitted to temper the individual life, and combine men's lives into an ideal social state. The conception of religion as the complete harmony of human life in all its parts, whether social or individual, is claimed as

the greatest of all the conceptions of Comte, and is elaborated in the *Politique Positive*. He says: "To constitute any true religious state there must be a concurrence of two primary elements, the one objective and intellectual, the other subjective and moral. . . . It is requisite that our minds should conceive a power without us, so superior to ourselves as to command the complete submission of our entire life. . . . To make submission complete, affection must unite with respect; and this combination of feelings is effected spontaneously by the sense of gratitude. The profound respect inspired by the supreme power awakens also a mutual sentiment of benevolence in all who join in devotion to the same great object. The analysis which I finally choose as the best to express the true series of parts is that which makes religion consist of three essential elements: doctrine, worship, and government. . . . The doctrine forms the groundwork for the worship, and the worship for the government."

It cannot be doubted that there is substantial truth in all this definition of religion. What, then, is the doctrine of the positive religion? Its creed is the sum of definite knowledge, the consensus of all science, the laws of the whole field of pheno-

mena, physical and moral. In this system one can see that science itself is the creed, and thus science and religion are brought into unity. What is its worship? The positivist acknowledges the necessity for a supreme power and a controlling providence. Where is his God? What is the external power which, Comte says, should be possessed of superiority so irresistible as to leave no sort of uncertainty about it? He does not find the supreme being in a superhuman world, but in collective humanity, in the ideal human race, in the whole of human beings, past, present, and future. In place of worshipping God, the personal and absolute unity of life, Comte would substitute the worship of humanity, "the real author of the benefits for which thanks were formerly given to God," "the only one we can know, and therefore the only one we can worship." The religion of humanity has an elaborate worship, private and public. It divides the former into personal and domestic; the guardian angels of the family—the mother, wife, and daughter—are the three types which represent the ideal of humanity. Domestic piety is expressed in seven sacraments,—presentation, initiation, admission, destination, marriage, maturity, retirement, transformation, and

incorporation. Public worship has for its symbol a woman of the age of thirty with a child in her arms, a calendar or series of festivals in honour of all the great epochs and characteristics of human life, and a priesthood whose function is to systematise knowledge and control life at every point. Such is the positivist conception of God, of religion, and worship.

To begin with the last, it will be apparent that positivism offers to us an elaborate imitation of catholic and mediæval Christianity. It embodies all the worst features of priestcraft, and restores authority, not as an infinite ideal, contained in a person whom we can love and venerate, but as an immutable order, expounded by science. Public opinion is to be our deity. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" that old temptation is enthroned, on the ground that within the sphere of nature man is highest—nature's choicest result and crown. He is all that, so far as science teaches, but not so far as to grasp the crown of deity. If positivism makes collective humanity its supreme being, it bids us worship that which had a beginning on the earth, and will likely have an end. It can never shut out the thought of a Power of which humanity is but a small and fugitive product, which wrought when humanity was not, and

will continue to work when humanity has ceased to be. Collective humanity, take it all in all, is a poor, frail, fallible, and wayward production ; and when taken to pieces, it is a sinful and miserable creature, but for some Power that strives to erect it above itself.

The worship of humanity is a retrograde step, from whatever point we view it. Comte's deification of humanity is just as much a theological and metaphysical conception as any other which he rejects. He uses the very tools which he disdains, and proceeds to offer for worship that which he makes out of them—an abstract, incongruous, unintelligent subject of his idealising faculty. He admits that man can rise to the objective or universal point of view, in relation to humanity, and it is equally possible and necessary with reference to the universe. Man regards himself as part of a greater whole in one case, and he is likewise compelled so to regard himself in the other. The unity of nature is a far grander conception than the unity of human nature ; and once that idea is grasped, it is a prodigious piece of absurdity for Comte to say that humanity and not God is that universal spirit which

“Lives through all life, extends to all extent,  
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.”



Here we touch the bottom of his error. For when we carry the idea of organic unity beyond the life of man to the environment in which it develops, we can no longer regard humanity as the chief and central phenomenon of the universe. However grand it may be, it is finite, concrete, and knowable. Comte condemned the study of the stars, and even of the planets, because it tends to dwarf the conception of humanity, and prove how absurd it is to regard it as the great being. Since our world is a mere speck in the awful universe of worlds, humanity can set up no such claim. Lalande once said that he had swept the heavens with his telescope, and found no God, as if God were an optical phenomenon. Comte said that "to minds early familiarised with true philosophical astronomy, the heavens declare no other glory than that of Kepler and Newton, and of all those who have aided in establishing her laws." Mark the vicious assumption contained in such a statement—the capital error which he condemns in all theological systems, that man makes God in his own image, and subordinates the universe to himself. There is no man who stands under the canopy of the cathedral of immensity, and gazes into the starry heavens, but will, in the depths of



his soul, echo the grand old burst of the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God."

The object of religious sentiment will ever continue to be that which it has ever been. There is One whom we do not speak of as the unknowable power, but as God manifest to our consciousness, who guides the stars, age after age, in paths that never err, and poises the gleaming dewdrop on its blade of grass, and on whom we can place unshaken trust yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The religion of humanity is too partial a synthesis, or harmony of life—too artificial and factitious and defective—to be a substitute for the worship of a personal God, the God of the universe, nigh to every one of us; yet many thinkers regard Comte's idea of humanity as a noble and inspiring one, and fruitful of the best results in setting forth the organic unity of social life and development. If it breaks down in trying to abolish the old distinction between religion and morality, there can be no doubt that in the region of morality most valuable contributions have been made. The fact that it shifts the centre of authority from a theological to a sociological base, which is its capital error, points at the same time in the direction of its chief merit. Humanity is a noble

conception, and we cannot raise it to a too lofty ideal, short of worshipping it; all wish to see "the enthusiasm of humanity," the service of humanity, more thoroughly recognised, and freed from every element of self-interest. Comte has done this, as no other among the sceptred intellects of the race has done. He saw with the insight of genius that any true theory of social improvement could be deduced, not from abstract reasonings about human nature, or the observation of contemporary social phenomena, but from a study of them in their historic dependence. It is not a few kings and statesmen that govern the progress of society; what real influence they did possess arose from their being organs or instruments of great time movements. Comte saw clearly that at bottom the laws of sociology are the laws of history; as a philosophical socialist, he founded his views on the phenomena of social evolution, and left the fields of Utopia to poets and dreamers. In the study of social laws, and their systematic co-ordination, the positive method considers the static and dynamic question, or what corresponds to order and progress of the social organism. Social dynamics are of greatest interest in our day, because they embody the great and pregnant idea of the gradual development of humanity.

Many of our keenest moral thinkers, besides Lewes and Mill, acknowledge the stimulus they have derived from Comte in the study of social problems. Another of these was James Hinton, of whom it has been said that he was as great in ethics as Newton was in physics. That is unqualified praise. But Hinton drew his inspiration from Comte, as we learn from his *Life*, where he says : "My obligations are absolute to the positive school. I am, indeed, the most advanced positivist I know. . . . My thought was not suggested from the spiritual side, but from the scientific. . . . The word 'altruistic' I borrow from Comte. Is it not a capital word ? We want it. It is the antithesis to 'self' ; self being=deadness ; altruistic being=life ; and so on."

The principal phases of human evolution are seen in individual, domestic, and social life ; in the subjection of the first to a wise discipline, of the second to sympathetic instincts, and of the third to the luminous influences of reason. In this evolution of humanity it is Comte's mission to expound at great length the advance from personal or egoistic to social and altruistic affections. The two extremes of different elementary tendencies are thus designated. He shows how man passes

through preservative and personal instincts till the series is terminated by the noble group of social or altruistic instincts. The last are as essentially a part of human nature as any of the others, and their superiority is attested not only from a social point of view, but from the moral condition of the individual practising them. "A character governed by the inferior instincts alone can have neither stability nor fixed purposes; these qualities are alone attained under the empire of the impulses which prompt man to live for others. Every individual, man or animal, accustomed to live for self alone, is condemned to a miserable alternation of ignoble torpor or feverish activity. Even personal happiness and merit therefore depend on the predominance of the sympathetic instincts. Progress towards such a moral condition should be the object of every living being. *To live for others* is thus the natural conclusion of all positive morality." According to this view of Comte's system, it affirms, from the point of science and history, Christ's conception, from the religious and intuitive side, of the absorption of self in the service of others as the crown of life, "the perfect law of liberty," of happiness and hope. As we may expect from one who exalts the altruistic

principle to such eminence, the individualistic point of view obtains little recognition from Comte, as little as it does from Christ. "Individuals," he says, "should be regarded not as so many distinct beings, but as organs of the one great being." We could not know ourselves as men, or live according to our nature, if we shut ourselves up within the limits of the individual. If the individual were isolated from society, all that marks him as man would be wanting. The individual, for whom an isolated existence is impossible, can only develop according to his proper nature as a member of the family or of society. Isolation is the word of Cain; it is the same hard word, Comte will tell you, of Rousseau with his doctrine of "primitive rights," and his theory of the "social contract," which reduces the state to a product of the individual will. But even Rousseau was acute enough to see that man in the social state alone "ceases to be a dull and limited animal, and becomes an intelligent being and a man." Individualism was seen by Comte to be defective as a social power, and therefore he taught that "the true human point of view is not individual but social." With the idea of the organic unity of life in his mind, he opposed the indi-

vidualistic tendency everywhere in metaphysics and history—in metaphysics because it tended to dissolve society, as Burke puts it, “into the dust and powder of individuality,” and in the last three centuries where its pulverising effects were visible. The Reformation asserted man’s individual relation to God, and the right of private judgment, but it tended to isolate man from his fellows. “The immediate effect of putting personal salvation in the foremost place was to create an unparalleled selfishness, a selfishness rendering all social influences nugatory, and thus tending to dissolve public life.”<sup>1</sup>

Public events in France suggested to Comte the same lesson. The Revolution was an explosion of individualism, in which the rights of man were asserted, and chaos ensued, because the men who figured in it had no new order or reconstruction of society to take the place of demolished feudalism.

Now, this thought of organic evolution, in which altruism becomes the predominating law, is a magnificent thought, and commands the suffrages of all great thinkers in our time. It is capable of many developments and fruitful applications; and it coalesces with the moral teaching of the gospel

<sup>1</sup> *Politique Positive.*



in many ways. Mere individualism is nothing but anarchy. More than half our social errors spring from placing self at the centre of all things. Nothing could be more flagrantly false or suicidal to happiness. A man who should grow up alone would not be a man ; in a word, he is made by and for fellowship, and in the family he first learns this, where love makes service its own reward. The individual cannot find his happiness in isolation, but in the life of the whole to which he belongs ; and the lesson which Comte drew from the French Revolution is one we should lay to heart—that the individual, as such, is devoid of moral life, and must rise above himself and live in the life of humanity if he would have any depth or wealth of being. It is the old truth contained in the saying of Christ, that a man must lose his life in order to save it. Man only finds himself by living in others, and subordinating himself to a whole.

Comte pressed this view so far as to regard with jealousy the individualistic position, and almost deny its right to be. Now, the sacred individuality of men must not be disregarded ; it must be respected, and then cultivated, so as to be used with nobler energy and keener responsibility in



the service of others. Egoism, as common sense shows, is a necessary factor in life; nor does altruism deny it. Herbert Spencer says: "If the dictate, 'live for self,' is wrong one way, the opposite dictate, 'live for others,' is wrong in another way." The rational dictate is to "live for self and others." This is quite true, but still the question remains, How is this to be acted on? If a child is taught to divide his duties into those for self and those for others, when it comes to practice, he will be forced to ask, "How much for self, and how much for others?" and in the endeavour to serve two masters, he will become half selfish, and turn out selfish altogether. But let us look upon ourselves as means to an end, and then the dual principle, "Myself and others," will dissolve into the moral unity, "Myself in and for others." In this way the two tendencies of our nature are balanced and harmonised.

Positivism ranks high as a system in affirming altruism to be its cornerstone, but it is defective in leaving the moral nature without any objective support, without any inspiring ideal, without any moral dynamic. It leaves it to invent its own idea of good, as the intellect was left before Christ. When the choice is put before us, of God or of

man, of Christ or of humanity, we cannot doubt which is the fairer ideal or higher reality. We see the unity of the divine and human in one great living picture, in the life and death of Christ; and "till that ideal is reached, it cannot be said that the Christian idea is exhausted, or that the place is vacant for a new religion."<sup>1</sup> The idea of the unity of life, set forth in positivism, has been extended by recent science, and a new word has been coined to express it. That word is "solidarity," and it means that bond of union and interdependence which connects into one all spheres of being. We speak of the solidarity of the race, and mean that all depend on each other, are sensitive to the same influences, and impelled by them in common. We speak of the solidarity of the universe, and mean that one principle of life pervades it. The law by which man lives is the law of stars and crystals, of flowers and mathematics. The orbs of heaven are not isolated, but shine in systems and galaxies. In all parts of nature there is community of life and development. And interdependence rises with the scale of life. Changes in the sun affect the movements of our planet and the currents of human history. Possibly the

<sup>1</sup> Caird's *Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte*.

universe is one sensitive organism, the different parts of which are too vast for us to perceive their correlations. Such a thought gives added weight to Comte's idea that the whole of humanity is one organism, and that what constitutes the moral significance of history is the gradual triumph of altruism over egoism, "which begins by setting the family before the individual, which goes on to set the state before the family, and which must end in setting humanity before all." Science thus unites with religion in proclaiming that "no man liveth unto himself." This law of solidarity casts an exquisite light over all history and the universe. Let us see it running through all the ranges of our moral and social well-being. It is such teachings of positivism and science that are needed to give amplitude and scope to our inexhaustible gospel. For it is the purpose of Christ's redeeming love that every man should know, in all its potency, the throbbings of this larger life, that every note which disturbs this world-harmony should cease, and that all things should be reconciled, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth. Such teachings are needed, for the tendency of the Church is to become a clubhouse, and they must be learned if the Church would reassume the authority over

social relations which it once wielded, if it would restore marriage and the family once more to the Christian ideal, and terminate the unhappy conflicts between capital and labour which break the unity of Christian nations. Such teachings are needed, for our Christian seminaries are munching at the dry crusts of old theologies, or longing for the latest novelties of German criticism, while they neglect the deep undercurrents of thought running through the nation and seeking practical development on social and ethical lines never followed before. Rest assured that the Church that works for the highest and broadest interests of humanity is the Church of the future, and will do most for the reconstruction of society. Let us learn that life is individual in its responsibility, and social in its aims. It is, as Canon Westcott says, "the opportunity of the individual to win for God by God's help that which lies within his reach; to accomplish on a scale, little or great, the destiny of humanity as it has been committed to him; to rise to the truth of the incarnation as the revelation of the purpose of the Father for the world which He made. . . . Every member must hold himself pledged to regard his endowments of character, of power, of place, of wealth, as a trust to be adminis-

tered with resolute and conscious purpose for the good of men ; pledged to spread and deepen the sense of one life, one interest, one hope, one end for all, in the household, in the factory, in the warehouse, in the council room ; pledged to strive as he has opportunity to bring all things that are great and pure and beautiful within the reach of every fellow-worker ; pledged to labour so that to the full extent of his example and influence toil may be universally honoured as service to the state, literature may be ennobled as the spring and not the substitute of thought, art (too often the minister of luxury) may be hallowed as the interpreter of the outward signs of God's working."

The last peculiarity of positivism we notice is its attitude in relation to *immortality*. It accepts this doctrine, because it copies Christianity as a religion in all its main features, but it accepts the doctrine in a sense which is nearly tantamount to its denial. It teaches that we share the life of humanity objectively during our visible existence on earth, and after we are dead subjectively by living in the hearts and intellects of others, or in the deeds and influences that have promoted social good. This is what the positivist regards as sinking back into the supreme being that gave him

birth, as the Buddhist dreams of sinking into Nirvana, the eternal sleep. There is the utter and endless annihilation of self, as in the Eastern religion; but Comte grasped at the thought of a man's surviving influence, and held out the promise of what is called posthumous immortality. We can understand his rejection of a personal hereafter when we remember his persistent disregard and depreciation of the "individual" throughout his whole system. Mere individualism, or regard for self in everything, does not rise above the brute, and like the brute might be left to perish. But individuality is not individualism; and being one's self, in order to live not for self, but for the common good, has something in its embers which doth live, and that something is more than a memory or influence. Wordsworth calls the doctrine of a future life "the head and mighty paramount of truths." The religion of humanity dangles before our eyes the prospect of affectionate remembrance and honour from posterity, but one may well have misgivings about such a prospect. Most of the men we have met with in life know little and care less about our best deeds, or the wrongs that may have been inflicted upon us; and if they show so little interest when we are above



ground, it is not likely that they will embalm us in a particularly fragrant immortality when we go underground and mix with unconscious dust. The dead lie forgotten in the grave,—

“Their memory and their name is gone,  
Alike unknowing and unknown.”

“If the promise of posthumous immortality were as good as a Bank of England note,” some one has said, “how could it satisfy my craving?” It is the prerogative of a personal conscious being, who does not make God in his image, but believes that God made him in His image, to cry with a conviction of inextinguishable life, “Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die.” The sense of individuality relates every one who feels it to God and immortality, and inspires him with a “faith that looks through death.” All other creatures go down unconsciously to their fate, but man looks before and after, and no thought affects him with such moral impressiveness as this one, “It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment.” Conscience, the calmer and clearer it is, points to the day of judgment, and bids every man live in sight of it.

The intellect of man, no less than his conscience, demands a future life for the highest products of



life on earth. Think of the nature and mind of man, that soars to a conception like the solidarity of the universe ; think of that concentration of consciousness and intelligence which exists by itself, alone and inviolable, and constitutes individual character—shall that wonderful instrument, so akin to Deity, after a few year's preparation, be broken up and laid aside for ever ? Shall those indomitable energies that have subdued nature, extracted her secrets, and made her do the bidding of man—that teeming imagination, instinct with ideas of truth and beauty—those high and generous sympathies that have prompted heroic efforts to restore the rights of humanity or rescue souls from the bondage of sin—that stern conscientiousness which has refused to hold its tongue for the sake of position, and has preferred poverty and reproach to the utterance of one false word or the sacrifice of principle—shall these greatest works of the Maker's mind, these brightest emanations of His Spirit, vanish out of existence, with the mechanical instincts of the brute ? Shall the intellect of a Plato and Newton, the sanctity of an Augustine and Fenelon, and the philanthropy of a Howard and Wilberforce, dissolve into their elements, like the sap that once circulated in the

cells of forest monarchs, or the breath that animated the giant monsters of a primeval world? If such personal being could melt away into nothing, then here is such a miracle of annihilation—such a ceasing to be of what is noblest upon earth—that it stultifies the intellect, as no other miracle does, and surpasses belief.

*The heart of man craves a future life.* The religion of humanity cannot meet the need of beings such as we are, placed in such a world as ours, if it forbids us to pass the visible horizon. It cannot help us to interpret the riddle of the sphinx, to face the insistent facts of sin, suffering, and misery. Gather up into your heart of hearts the sense of wrongs unredressed, of misery unrelieved, of griefs beyond remedy, of failure without hope, of physical pain so acute as to be the one overmastering reality in a world of shadows, of mental depression so dismal as to make physical pain a relief, and it is enough to crack the heart-strings, and shatter their power of endurance, if to this world only we restrict our gaze. Is not this the problem of the Book of Job, and is not the solution only found when a glimpse of immortality, like the dayspring from on high, visits the pilgrim of the night?

The heart of man craves a future life, and He who made the heart will not disappoint or contradict that longing, but will keep His word. He has met the craving, and kept His word. For He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," and that everlasting love makes its appeal to our hearts by holding out before our eyes an immortality of bliss. God has set eternity in our hearts; He has planted the thought, the consciousness of it, and the longing after it; and bright shoots of everlastingness grow up in it. But they increase in force, and flourish by the knowledge of Him who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel, who says, "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." We think too much of death and too little of the fulness of life to which it is the way. The great poet just gone from us was in the habit of saying to his friends, "You know as well as I that death is life, just as our daily, our momentarily, dying body is none the less alive and ever recruiting new forces of existence. Without death, which is our crape-like word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of that which we call life. For myself, I deny death as an end of everything. Never say of me that I am dead." And with his

words, which General Gordon thought the finest lines in English poetry he had ever read, let us close the argument,—

“I go to prove my soul ;  
I see my way as birds their trackless way.  
I shall arrive ! What time, what circuit first,  
I ask not ; but, unless God send His hail,  
Or blinding fireballs, sleet, or stifling snow,  
In good time—His good time—I shall arrive.  
He guides me and the bird.  
In His good time.”

In conclusion, positivism, the religion of humanity, can be no rival to Christianity. It may meet the tastes of a few who have picked up the bone which agnosticism has flung to those who still want a religion of some kind, but it cannot satisfy the multitude who are struggling with daily needs and narrow cares, who want to know that there is no human being so insignificant as not to be of countless worth in the eyes of Him who created all things. It cannot offer consolation to those who are in grief, hope to the bereaved, strength to the weak, forgiveness to the sinful, rest to the weary and heavy laden. Christianity has answered all these needs in the past ; and while it has power to do so, it will verify its claim to be the everlasting gospel—the only true religion of humanity.

## VII.

### *THE GOSPEL AND SOCIALISM.*

IF we carefully read the signs of the times, we cannot fail to note that religion is becoming decidedly less doctrinal and more practical among us; we are emerging out of the theological into the sociological stage of human progress. Socialism is one of the prevailing movements of the time; the currents of opinion and feeling run strongly in this direction; it stirs every country in Europe, and gains the adherence of some of its most eminent thinkers. Parliament and press ring with proofs that social questions are to the front. The dim populations, as light dawns on them, welcome it everywhere as a new gospel. Socialism is in the air, and as it sweeps on, men in high places recognise the movement, and express their sympathy with it. The churches vie with each other in a desire to catch its breezes. At Church Congresses bishops descant on its claims, and do so with a

tone and temper which indicates that many of those claims are rooted in justice and ought to be complied with. There is much in socialism which entitles it to be spoken of as a standard lifted up for the people; as a standard which may be lifted up by any Christian minister, whose mission it is to set forth Christ's gospel as a social gospel, a kingdom of heaven upon earth. Many of our critical and ecclesiastical questions sink into insignificance before the problem of the best means, consistent with equity and justice, for bringing about a more equal division of the products of industry, and making it possible for all to lead a dignified life, and less difficult for all to lead a good life.

Our great and many-sided gospel has no need to fear this socialistic crusade, but is able to guide and inspire it. If it is set up as a rival by many of its leaders, we can afford to be calm and undisturbed in presence of such a claim. For the ideas and sentiments which have developed socialism came at first from Christianity, and must still come before its aspirations can be realised. Every Christian, who accepts the teaching, example, and spirit of his Master, has a socialistic vein in him, and it is in Christian countries that socialistic

doctrines make the most decided advance. They are largely touched, and should be wholly penetrated, with the spirit of Christianity.

### MISCONCEPTIONS.

It is necessary to remove certain prejudices which have arisen from not trying clearly to understand what socialism is. The term is somewhat elastic and too comprehensive, and one, therefore, which may be thought to embrace all sorts of fads and all conditions of opinion. There are many phases of socialism, which make it apparently one of the most elusive and contradictory phenomena of our time. We read, in books on the subject, of Tory and Radical socialists, of Roman Catholic and Protestant socialists, of Christian and Atheistic socialists, of State and Communal socialists, and so forth. From this it will appear that the movement is protean in its forms, and connects itself with the most opposite opinions. This may only show, however, its vital and adaptive spirit, while laying it open to many objections.

In the opinion of many, socialism of the present day is out and out anti-religious and hostile to the Church. Religion, it says, deceives the



common people by teaching them to submit to their wrongs and miseries, and presenting them with a cheque payable in heaven ; and the Church ought to perish, because it is a police institution for upholding capital. On the Continent they call it the Red Spectre, and here many regard it as a thing essentially of the evil one, and therefore to be resisted by Christians. There is an extreme party who, in their propaganda, aim at atheism, and hate Christianity as not only alien but hostile to their doctrines. Such atheistic and antichristian opinions are not, however, a necessary concomitant of socialism ; they are accidental features of the movement, and do not belong to its essence ; they are held by a fanatical few, not by the main body of leaders and followers and sympathisers.

Others, again, have been led to believe that socialism wants to abolish marriage and the family. Some theorists in this school have proposed to socialise marriage, like everything else, but they are a dwindling few compared with those who accept the Christian ideal of marriage and family life. Such opinions are not due to socialism, and such practices are followed rather by the pampered sons of fortune against whom socialism lifts up a standard. This new movement, on the contrary,

has done much to enlarge and elevate our working idea of woman ; it has gone hand in hand with our Christian gospel in proclaiming the equality of the sexes and abolishing the double standard of morals adopted towards them ; it has helped to throw open doors of industry and usefulness to women which were too long closed ; and it pleads to let them have a share in making the laws under which they live and suffer.

Once more, socialism is thought by a great many to be a crusade against private property, and to seek resort to confiscation and robbery in accomplishing its designs. There is a fundamental enmity between the revolutionary spirit and the spirit of Christianity. The revolutionary spirit is materialistic ; the Christian is spiritual. At once it may be admitted that some of its followers advocate extreme opinions of this kind, and revolutionary measures to subvert the present economic and social basis ; but the quintessence of socialism, as stated by its ablest expounders, contemplates nothing of the sort. It is a gross perversion of the truth to say that it demands that every one should share and share alike. It is unfair to describe it as an attempt to plunder the rich for the benefit of the poor. Many imagine that the entire wealth of the community

is to be divided into equal parts, and that each will have a share of it for his own use. No socialist with an ounce of sense in his head credits such nonsense, and the merest tyro can show that in twenty-four hours this sort of equality will be upset, and the old evils return. Socialism, being so obscurely conceived, and sometimes so persistently misunderstood, gives rise in many minds to an absurd amount of exaggerated fears, and calls forth no end of ignorant and flippant criticism. Mr. Spurgeon once described the difference between Christianity and Communism thus: "Christianity says, 'All mine is thine.' Communism says, 'All thine is mine.'" Christianity does not teach that "All mine is thine, if it enunciates the sacredness of personal property; and Communism, so far as we read of it in the Acts, was the exact opposite of the saying, "All thine is mine." Besides, it is not true that socialism says, "All mine is thine." We deprecate such a statement of the question. It does certainly contemplate a fairer division of the fruits of industry, but not an equal division of property. Without doubt, the cardinal principle underneath all phases of socialism is an economic one, in which the means of production should become the collective property of the national or

communal body with a view to an equitable distribution of the fruits of labour ; but it is not a necessary part of the socialistic programme to advocate the confiscation of property or its compulsory division among the people.

### GRIEVANCES.

Until lately the movement could be dismissed with a shallow sneer, or a gross mis-statement of the truth ; but now it is deemed worthy of earnest and sympathetic consideration on the part of the best religious, philosophical, and political thinkers. It is unwise to treat it in any other way. As it rests on a wide basis of discontent among the toiling multitudes, the effect of suppression is to drive it underground, where it grows fierce, and becomes a hidden danger ready to burst forth into the wild justice of revenge.

The historian, De Tocqueville, profoundly observes, that "when the people are overwhelmed with misery, they are resigned. It is when they begin to hold up their heads, and to look above them, that they are impelled to insurrection." The dim populations of many lands have begun to look up, and to discover that they have been "the disinherited of the world ;" and it is a fact for good or

ill that a spirit of discontent and revolt is steadily permeating the labouring classes of all countries. A belief in divine justice, and a desire to see it realised in human relations, leads of necessity to the condemnation of iniquity, however established by prescription, and to aspirations that are at once levelling and resistless. The socialist brings the pitiless sphinx once more into the midst of society, and sets before our generation the old riddle in a new shape ; he tells us that it threatens to devour our churches, and our gospel too, unless it has some fresh solution for these social wrongs and miseries. He is a pessimist, to begin with, as he sets forth the bad side of the social state, as he points to the strong crushing the weak, the rich making gain out of the poor, inequality becoming harsher, and misery sinking into despair. But then he aspires to an ideal where social well-being can be attained and the conditions of labour improved.

As a movement for the deliverance of the poor from their unfavourable surroundings, the Christian churches ought to sympathise with it, and take their place in the van of social reform ; but it is a complaint of socialists that the churches are indifferent to social well-being. If it has been the fault of socialists to forget that man has got a soul, no less

has it been the fault of Christians to forget that he has got a body. A popular preacher often quotes the saying that "some very earnest Christians are so diligently engaged in saving souls that they have no time to save men and women." Is there not some ground for the reproach that Christians are so absorbed in their own individual salvation as to neglect the wants of their suffering fellowmen? Religion ought to deal with physical, no less than with spiritual wants. Did not Christ attend to the bodies as well as to the souls of men, when He was upon earth? Misery abounds everywhere. Great evils fascinate and compel public attention. Here it is the shame of putting women into mills or factories to be overwrought, underpaid, and forced to work under the most enervating conditions, or the woe of seamstresses struggling in garrets to sustain a precarious existence; there it is the mischief of the sweating system, that consumes the bone and muscle of its victims in insanitary workshops. Sometimes the pitiable tale is of men who have been exposed to the grievous and depraving effects of being out of work; then it is a picture of labourers at the dock gates fighting like wild beasts for tickets to get the chance of a job, or of thousands and thousands of dockers on strike, when

some of them, hungry and weary, could be seen at their big meetings, "falling down like rotten sheep," as their great leader put it, while their wives and children were suffering unspeakable misery at home.

We cannot close our eyes any longer to these social distresses, or hold our tongues. It becomes Christians to "speak up" in their Master's name for the oppressed and the poor. Who were the spokesmen of these miserable dockmen in making a righteous demand? Not the ministers of Jesus Christ; not the magnates of the religious world; but a few socialists who, amid the starving multitudes, kept themselves and the sufferers in such moderation and self-control as to be the admiration of the world. What will the issue be if in these life-and-death struggles the people look to Christians and find them "dumb dogs," while socialists put every power at their service? It should be the bitterest drop to us that social progress is mainly effected by men opposed to our churches and our religion. Nothing is so deplorable as the nerveless and cowardly apathy against which the stones are crying out. The only place for Christians is to be in the van of every battle with iniquity, first in all self-denying reforms, and ready for the task of



social salvation. Our lives should be full of a divine and passionate love, full from end to end of a holy and ardent pity for men who suffer wrong at the hands of men, and for whom hardly a voice is raised. Never let the orphan's rags, the stain of woman, and the anguish of the toiler appeal to us in vain. Lift up a standard for the people.

The chief causes of discontent in the ranks of labour are attributed by socialists to insufficient and uncertain employment, to the unequal distribution of the fruits of labour between the master and workman, and to the ever-increasing difficulty of the intelligent wage-earner in attaining a competency. These are conditions as old as the history of human industry, but the present economic industrial system is said to be specially productive of these evils, and the misery which springs out of these evils is said to be incalculable. That suffering is often exaggerated, sometimes absurdly so; nevertheless it is great, as the strike of 150,000 dock labourers has recently shown. The unskilled and half-skilled labour of the country has lifted up its voice, and uttered its cry of vast, deep discontent, and it is a lesson which all of us should take to heart. From this class the next trouble will come, and under the conditions of our civilisa-

tion they have a genuine grievance. Their fellow-workmen of the higher grades have strongly sympathised with them, and pledged themselves to do everything in their power to forward their proper organisation and secure for them the just reward of labour. Such complaints, so far as they are just, every patriot and every Christian must ponder, and feel more or less indignant that they should exist at all, to make the lot of the poor toiler so insecure and hard. "Justice is the crying want of the world," and few of us but hear some of its most piercing tones in William Morris's "March of the Workers,"—

"These are they who build thy houses, weave thy raiment, win  
thy bread,  
Smooth the rugged, fill the barren, turn the bitter into sweet,  
All for thee this day and ever. What reward for them is  
meet?

Till the host comes marching on.

Many a hundred years passed over have they laboured, deaf  
and blind:  
Never tidings reached their sorrow, never hope their toil  
might find;  
Now at last they've heard and hear it, and the cry comes  
down the wind,

And their feet are marching on.

O ye rich men, hear and tremble! for with words the sound  
is rife,  
Once for you and death we labour, changed henceforward is  
the strife;  
We are men, and we shall battle for the world of men and life,  
And our host is marching on.

Is it war, then? Will ye perish as the dry wood on the fire?  
Is it peace? Then be ye of us, let your hope be our desire.  
Come and live! for life awaketh, and the world shall never  
tire,

And hope is marching on.

On we march, then, we the workers, and the rumour that ye  
hear

Is the blended sound of battle and deliverance drawing near;  
For the hope of every creature is the banner that we bear,  
And the world is marching on."

### AIMS.

There are socialists and socialists, as we have indicated; there is a socialism that is irreligious, and there is a socialism that is Christian. It has been a vague word on men's lips, and is likely to be so for some time to come, and consequently its aims are open to a great deal of misunderstanding. It includes a revolutionary anarchist like Bakunin, who seeks by any and every means to destroy all institutions and to overthrow all authority, as well as a constructive statesman like Bismarck, who has tried his hand at legislative solutions of the social question. Certain men turn up in Trade Unionist Congresses and at times of social upheaval, and propound socialistic doctrines that are dangerous. Trades Unionism is itself a marked triumph of this movement, and has put the skilled labour of the United Kingdom in a position superior to that of

any other nation on the face of the earth, but it is more or less haunted by a class of socialists who are faddists and fanatics—men who bring forward sensational programmes, propose extravagant schemes, and excite passions without doing an atom of good for the cause of social well-being. Depend upon it that the mere agitators make a great deal more show in the world than is at all proportionate to their real influence. Nor let them have such influence as to turn us from the consideration of social and economic questions in a calm, but thoroughgoing manner.

A double aim marks the gospel of socialism, and the social gospel of Christ does not look askance upon the one or the other. Of all influences favourable to their accomplishment, the most potent has been the religious; and of all religions, that of Christ, with its doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the law of righteousness, has been the most favourable.

The first aim is essential, and underlies every form of social regeneration, and seeks to *socialise the industrialism of modern times, making it subservient to human good*. We find the question at bottom to be an economic one; what is desired is

some economic readjustment by which the poor toilers, so long excluded from, may be included in a fair participation in the best blessings of cultivation and enjoyment. The problem in Adam Smith's day was how wealth could be secured, and this country has solved it in a way to be the wonder and envy of nations. To-day the problem is the distribution of wealth, and we are just at the beginning of it. What is the "Quintessence of Socialism," as put by Schaffle, one of its ablest expounders? However variously conceived may be its aim (of the socialism of to-day), he says that "critically and practically, the cardinal thesis stands out:—(1) Collective instead of private ownership of all instruments of production, land, factories, machines, etc.; (2) Organisation of labour by society, instead of the distracting competition of individualism; (3) Distribution of collective output of all kinds of manufacture, in proportion to the value of work done by each worker." The author of *An Inquiry into Socialism* expounds the same view with sagacious and powerful force, and declares that this is the scientific form of the movement, and is "merely a reflection or mirroring in the human intelligence of a great world-historic process, which

is fulfilling itself, whether we see it or not, whether we will it or not."

Now, this question of the distribution of wealth, while based on economics, does not lie outside the consideration of a gospel minister. It is really a religious question, and religious men are bound to face it. Has not our social gospel much light and healing to give here?

But socialism has a broader aim, and *comprehends a group of questions that pertain to social amelioration and improvement*. It is the outcome of a strong aspiration for a better life among the workers; an aspiration that stirs many minds, and is felt among many of the rich and cultured classes as keenly as among the workers themselves. The problem of the social man is a complex one, and needs to be attacked from all sides. There are social evils, whose name is legion, and the methods of social regeneration need to be as manifold. As a movement for the deliverance of the poor, and their introduction to a good and happy life, the gospel of God's love in Christ thoroughly agrees with socialism. There is a broad line of distinction between the two. Socialism insists on external and economic conditions for good; Christianity insists on the inward and



moral, because all social disorders are spiritual at heart, and the spiritual is the ultimate root of all life. Socialism makes the community the final and absolute proprietor of all wealth ; Christianity makes God the proprietor, and us His stewards for others. Socialism too much seeks to enforce its doctrine of property by brute force ; Christianity, by the moral leaven of love in the soul of man. The socialist cannot get rid of selfishness, and finds his best schemes frustrated by its subtle and constant intrusion ; Jesus meets this disorder of sin completely by His message of good-will to men—even the commendation of His own love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, He died for us, and offers this mighty lever of His self-sacrificing and persistent love to erect man above himself. The socialist thinks by equalising human conditions to secure the greatest amount of comfort and happiness, and forgets that you may materialise man a thousand times, and give him science and culture, and yet fail to impart to him the secret of satisfaction and peace. Dives is but a poor ideal to work for after all. On the other hand, Jesus Christ teaches that all vital development must be spontaneous, and from within ; that a change of character is to be sought rather than



a change of conditions; that this life lasts but a while, and is essentially a period of training, in which adverse conditions may work endurance, fortitude, and resignation, and so achieve that holiness which alone crowns a perfect life.

Now, these are strong and vivid contrasts, which we need to keep before our minds in a true study of our subject; but having indicated them, let us go on to say that Christianity and socialism need not be spoken of as rivals: they are compatible, and should not be made parties in a quarrel. The fact is that socialism needs to be Christianised, and that Christianity needs to be socialised. The Church should not take so much trouble, either by flourishings of the Ten Commandments, or by sneers at Utopian reconstructions of society, in which there shall be no rich churlish men and no poor discontented men, to protest against a sort of socialism that bawls out in Trafalgar Square, or fights behind the barricade. Let friends of the gospel purify it of whatever anarchic and revolutionary temper it may show, recognise how souls may be crushed by the weight of an antagonistic social environment, learn from socialism that there is a moral value in good housing, sanitary improvement, free libraries, and open spaces, and strive

more than ever, by that enthusiasm of humanity which it most powerfully generates, to secure a greater amenity of life for the poor. Christ, and Christ alone, gives us power to achieve the purest aims of unselfish and generous service. In Him do we find method, pattern, and impulse necessary to the highest well-being of society. There at His cross shines "the light that never was on sea or shore," to make men "alight with social ideals, aflame with social ardours, astir to seize every opportunity of social usefulness;" and there, with a passion of righteousness born from above, let each of us take up a standard for the people, and inscribe on it these words of Victor Hugo to his friend Lamartine: "A society that admits misery, a humanity that admits war, seem to me an inferior society and a debasing humanity; it is a higher society and a more elevated humanity at which I am aiming . . . I want to universalise property, not to abolish it; I would suppress parasitism; I want to see every man a proprietor, and no man a master. This is my idea of true social economy. The goal may be far distant, but is that a reason for not striving to advance towards it? Yea, as much as a man can long for anything, I long to destroy human fatality. I

condemn slavery ; I chase away every misery. I instruct ignorance ; I illumine darkness ; I discard malice. Hence it is that I have written *Les Miserables*."

From this examination of the subject are suggested a few lessons which we should take to heart. And the first is, *the duty of ministers of religion to be students of the social question, and preachers of righteousness with reference to it.* The question is as old as the selfish cry of the first murderer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It was the burning question which prophets of the Old Testament did not fear to take up ; they dealt honestly with social wrong, and were martyrs for protesting against it. Jesus Christ was despised and rejected of men, cast out by the leaders of "society" for being the friend of the poor, maimed, halt, and blind. The greatest social reformer was Jesus Christ, and they crucified Him for being so. Men who speak bitterly of the caste and coldness, pride and selfishness of the Christian society, always except the Divine Founder, who was the Friend of the poor and the Saviour of the lost. The Church was the original propagator of socialistic theories and measures. The writings of the Fathers expound

them. To check the unbridled individualism of the early monarchs, ecclesiastics in the dark ages picked out certain theories from the Scriptures and Church Fathers, and endeavoured to persuade the ruling classes to mitigate the hard lot of the masses of the period. Most of the proposals which the leading socialists of our own day squabble about so furiously among themselves, are to be found inculcated in the writings of mediæval doctors and schoolmen. Gradually, as Christian communities became more humane, the Church abandoned its socialistic mission. For some centuries the Church has waived its right to intervene in the social and economical policy of the nations, but within the last few years all the churches have begun to set up once more a claim to speak on such matters. Two clergymen of the Church of England will long be remembered for their sympathy with the working classes—Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley; they were not ashamed to be called Christian Socialists at a time when the name was a reproach. No later than last year a conference of bishops at Lambeth suggested that candidates for orders should possess “some knowledge of economic science.”

Christian ministers should take a position in the

van of social progress; they need not take a side in party politics, but they should take a very determined stand in every matter which affects the well-being, the health, and the morality of the people. "Ye ministers of His that do His pleasure," where are you in the midst of these social grievances, and what is the word on your lips? 'Tis not for them to make timid complaints about the fermenting restlessness on every side, and to speak of social movements as antichristian, when the Church may be sitting at its ease, or be less Christian than the movements on which they look down with pharisaic disdain. "Did Christ smile on colossal accumulations of property, and pronounce benedictions over the rich and full, that we should call movements antichristian, the first motive of which is to champion the cause of the poor, and protest against the concentration of the nation's wealth in the hands of men who are callous to their vast responsibilities? There is a broad line of distinction between Christ and the socialist. But the line of distinction between Christ and the selfish plutocrat is broader still."

Is there some truth in the averment, that Christian congregations are becoming clubs here and shops there, and that Church schemes are wrought

by the dominating spirit of commercialism? And are ministers of the gospel such clerical personages as Henrick Ibsen, the Norwegian poet, is making us acquainted with, mere exponents of traditional religion and conventional morality—sincere and devout, but obsequious to the classes, and incapable of grasping a new idea, striking at privileged injustice, or of sympathising with a generous emotion? I know but one answer, and it is that they come to the social question with insight, and learn that it is not sordid and secular, and unworthy of men who worship God, and look for immortality. Old questions of theology and worship, polity and service, are finding a new expression in terms of equality and righteousness, fraternity and fellowship. Ministers have been trained for theology, and why not for this great movement? Do you say, “It is *au fond* an economic question.” Quite so. Then the duty is to study economics. Their business is to understand the questions connected therewith, and to do so in no partisan spirit, but with eyes of justice that cannot see the rags of the poor, or the glittering gold of the rich, and prepared to go as far as the principle carries that “there is no respect of persons with God.” Let us approach the subject

without partiality or hypocrisy, declaring boldly the laws of righteousness and charity, so that the poor may be led to bless our gospel, and the rich to use their talents as our gospel constrains. Our office is mediatorial: let us hold the balance even between contending parties. Which Church will gain the strongest influence over the life of the people? The social problem is the field on which the decisive battle must be fought.

Again, *the social question conveys a lesson to the rich.*

It is not envy of the rich and privileged class that accounts for socialist dislike, but the evils that wealth is apt to generate. It is often a temptation to luxury, to an idle and indulgent life. Dives is the least acceptable of ideals; Dives doling out as much perhaps to Lazarus as barely keeps soul and body together, and then preaching the gospel of content to the poor, is not a lovely sight. The rich have to be warned against this temptation, and pointed to that other picture of the Good Samaritan—the man with the big heart and open hand, who pours “oil and wine” into the gaping wounds of sore distress, and takes infinite trouble to help the victims of tyrannical strength.

Wealth is likewise a temptation to social



injustice. It tempts to purse pride and churlishness, caste distinction and the insolence of superiority. It tends to the growth of parasitism, threatens to withdraw its custom if due servility is not shown, and commits enormities of private selfishness that are shamefully unjust. Not only does such a temptation vulgarise and debase the rich and those who believe in them, but it creates misery and produces despair, and so fosters vice and sensualism and socialism among the poor. The Church should warn the rich against this temptation, and lay upon them the responsibility of using their means for the good of others as unselfishly as if they parted with all, and must do so if they would seek protection from snares that constantly threaten to master them. The more we are entangled in a rich society, the more is such warning needed. God intends us to be the members of a rich community, with distributed functions, with increasing command over the products of the earth. But He intends us to rule these earthly things as instruments of the spirit, and not use them as the mammon of unrighteousness.

Once more, *the social question has its lesson for the poor.*

Whatever evils may be produced by the existing economic conditions, there are other fruitful sources of mischief against which the poor must be admonished. What brings poverty and misery into countless homes? Indolence, improvidence, intemperance—all these are anti-social and anti-christian, and they cause untold sufferings among the masses of the people. If these vices could be given up, and the opposite virtues of industry, forethought, and temperance become universal among the poor, they would bring to an end a condition of things under which it is impossible for men to spend decent and happy lives. Most commercial fortunes are made by saving. Many of the rich began as labourers or office boys, and have risen by their own talents. If the poor were industrious, sober, and thrifty, more than half our social ills would disappear, and contentment and happiness would prevail everywhere.

## VIII.

### *THE GOSPEL AND SOCIALISM— SOCIAL GRIEVANCES.*

AN evangelist tells us that the heart of Jesus Christ was moved to its very depths at the sight of the masses in His day, and that He felt much for them because they were left as sheep without a shepherd; they were “distressed and scattered,” or to come nearer His meaning still, “they were worried and neglected.” In His time the people were worsted and made the prey of the strong, and by those who should have helped them in their misery they were neglected. They raised the bitter cry unheard, “No man careth for our soul.” But He came and mixed with the people, He trusted and cared for them, He spent His life among them doing good; and when He was challenged to give evidences of His divine gospel, tokens of His supernatural mission, He said, “Go your way, and tell John the things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are

cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he who shall not be offended in Me.”

Now, it is a notable sign of the times that the compassion of Christ for the multitude stirs in many hearts. Bitter cries are lifted up, and gain a hearing as they never had before ; the “priests” and “Levites” of ceremonial religion dare not hurry past the groans of their suffering fellows, when so many of Christ’s “Good Samaritans” are caring for the least of His brothers and sisters in their hunger, poverty, and woe. “The Spirit of Christ is come to convince the world of its long and guilty neglect ; yea, to convince the churches of their sin in not undertaking with more definite purpose and sustained enthusiasm the great task of social salvation, and dealing effectively with the misery at their very doors.”

We hail it as a sign of revived Christ-likeness that the hapless lot of the multitude is burning itself into the moral imagination of the world, and is kindling the enthusiasm of humanity in all the churches, and is rousing the public conscience of to-day to ask, with an insistence unknown in the world’s history, “Who is my neighbour?” On

all sides men are learning that the possession of any gift carries with it corresponding responsibilities ; let us who call ourselves Christians learn that our lives here are not to be lives merely of personal ease, but lives instinct with a sense of duty, and a deep pity for those who are miserable and out of the way and in need of such help as we can give. "The churches could," says Mr. Tillet, "were they to put their shoulders to the wheel, be the architects to build up greater nobility in the manhood of the country." What has not been learned half enough yet, is to look after the material welfare of the people, for their moral condition largely depends on their social surroundings. Unless the latter are attended to, the spiritual good so often aimed at will be almost a failure. Christianity, if it is to recover lost ground, must include the bodies as well as the souls of men in its efforts, and must be ready again with the answer of its Founder to John the Baptist, in order to make good its claim to be a divine and world-wide religion.

Socialism, as already pointed out, is one of the most vital and powerful movements of the age ; a contemporary expression of social grievances which have been borne for centuries by the sweating

millions of labour. The name stands for a group of problems whose ultimate aim is to secure the elevation of the poor. We cannot undertake to mention the numerous causes of wrong and misery that prevail around us. For the most part the difficulties of our time are only the expression of the discontent of the democracy, as it grows better educated and organised, with the insecurity and degradation of its position. It is possible only to notice, and that at no great length, a few of the social problems that engage public attention. Men have a vague notion that there is "something wrong somewhere," and that it needs, whether from a Christian or socialist point of view, to be mended or ended.

Take, for instance, *the problem of Pauperism*.

There is no more terrible and troublesome symptom of social disease, and it has been for ages the opprobrium of political economy. Philosophers have suggested one plan after another to banish this gaunt spectre from society; idealists have dreamed of model republics where more productive lands and more propitious skies would satisfy material wants without sweat of brow. Malthusian theories, Fourierite projects, and communistic societies have been proposed and

attempted only to find failure persistently at their heels. Pauperism not only remains in every land, but grows more inveterate and menacing as the world advances in civilisation. The ragged host that stalks through the land is nearly one hundred thousand strong; thousands upon thousands more are placed in barracks up and down the country, while the slums of our cities and towns are crowded with sweltering masses of poverty. Socialism tries to go to the root of this squalid destitution, tries to show that it is due to wrong economic laws, which, if they are wrong, ought to be set right, and maintains that an economic readjustment in the interests of the poor man, would so reduce poverty that what remained could only exist as the just punishment of idleness or vice. Christian philanthropy, on the other hand, looks at the deeper yet more patent causes of selfish indolence and sin as the fruitful source of poverty, and recognises how much true insight there is in Christ's words, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good."

Pauperism may be regarded as the general resultant of all the bad and all the omitted legislation of the last five hundred years. The



Poor Law began in the reign of Elizabeth, with the Act of 1601, and for nearly three centuries English economists have worked away at it. Not only did that legislation supersede the dole at the monastery gates, but all religious bodies, Protestant and Roman Catholic, have created organisations for distributing charity. What has been the result? The evil has not been lessened. Poverty is one of the great social problems still. Social reformers stand before it, distressed and beaten. How ineffective and disastrous to the best interests of human benevolence, both legal relief and institutional charity have proved to be, we all know. Charity by law has turned the poor man into a pauper or person with a right to be provided for, and this creation of pauperism has bred some of the worst mischiefs. Its effects have been disabling and degrading upon the poor themselves, breaking down self-reliance, and leading to improvidence. It impairs the bonds of natural affection, by releasing children from the duty to take care of their parents. The aged poor are relegated to the poorhouse by unnatural sons and daughters. It dries up the fountains of true sympathy and help, thus becoming disastrous not only to the poor, but to the rich as well. The

nameless and numberless sweet charities that should come to the poor are obstructed by the present system. Institutional no less than legal charity has gone to create the evils which both of them seek to diminish. British benevolence, indiscriminately exercised, feeds an army of beggars as sturdy as ever tramped through the land.

Socialism alone has no radical cure ; Christianity, the charity of Christ, alone shows a more excellent way. The problem of poverty is a complex one, and no single measure can destroy it, and doubtless it is reduced by such exertions as secure intelligence and provident habits. But the only thing to avert this alarming evil is to bring the rich and poor together again, and this can only be done in the old way Christ did it, by carrying the gospel of friendliness into the homes of the poor. It may be necessary to organise and direct benevolence, to guard against fraud and imposition, but the one thing needed is a wise and tender ministry of personal and voluntary charity to the poor, just that sympathy and help which is so valuable in our own homes.

Poorhouses are not the glory of a land ; they should be superseded, and would be if Christian people only waked up in their hosts, and returned

to Christ's method of caring for the poor. Along with individual efforts, united action is much needed to abate the evils of poverty. Some attempt should be made to centralise our private and public charities, and get them reduced to some system of wise and careful administration. If all who want to help the poor without pauperising them could agree first to *unite*, and then *divide*—unite to learn and compare one another's methods, to know the several recipients of charity, and divide thereafter each to his own benevolent tasks, some of the gravest difficulties we have to contend with would be obviated. Abuses would quickly be found out, foolish schemes would be prevented, and measures tested and seen to be wise would be adopted. Volunteers ought to work with official bodies; working men ought to be placed on Boards of Guardians; such of them especially as hold office in the great Friendly and Co-operative Societies ought to have their valuable experience still further utilised in the service of the poor. By devising such plans of co-operative charity, it might be possible, not perhaps to abolish poverty altogether, but to abate it greatly, and bring about such a state of things that no one in real need would be without the means of relief.

Take next, *the problem of Drunkenness.*

If we want to cut off the springs of pauperism, it is absolutely necessary to repress intemperance. Material well-being is comparatively of little worth, for however high may be the wages of an artisan, they may be spent intemperately till the drink-fiend gets possession of him, and brings him and his family to the workhouse. Drunkenness is the fruitful source of destitution, the parent vice of many others, the disgrace of civilisation, the great social nuisance of our land. Just think how we spend our money. The sum spent upon intoxicating drink in the United Kingdom is nearly twice as great as the total amount paid for bread. We pay nearly four times as much for intoxicants as we pay for butter and cheese. We spend four and a half times as much upon drink as we spend upon milk. We spend more than five times as much upon drink as we do upon sugar, and nearly seven times as much as all our expenditure upon tea, coffee, and cocoa. We spend more upon drink than the rent-roll of all the farms and all the houses in the United Kingdom. We spend about twice as much upon drink as our total expenditure upon woollen, cotton, and linen. Besides the enormous expenditure upon drink, we have to pay

poor and police rates, costs of insanity, crime, vagrancy, accidents, disease, loss of labour, premature death, etc., giving at the very least another £100,000,000, and making a total loss to the nation of more than £200,000,000 yearly.

Working men ! this is the way the money goes ! If you want to be men, and not fools, avoid drink, and shun the public-house. It is a sad thing when a man gets into the grip of the drink-demon, for to be saved from it he needs a new stomach as well as a new heart. A physical crave is begotten, and cannot be cured unless the thing which supplies it is removed utterly beyond its reach.

Now, here is a vast social problem, and how should we meet it ? The problem, indeed, is complex and overwhelming, yet no heroic remedies are necessary ; the cure is a simple one. Remove the cause, the intoxicating drink, and the effect will cease. Men will be no longer the bondslaves of drink, and three-fourths of the miseries of our land would disappear. The practice of sobriety, thrift, and such virtues, will tend more to general prosperity than the dream of the socialists—a redistribution of wealth and property. Let the good angel of temperance come into the homes of working men, and cast out the drink-fiend :

each would undergo a social change ; new comforts would appear week by week, and something would be added to the capital provided for old age. But social action is also needed to grapple with the drink problem. Many who are not prepared to carry self-denial as far in private life as the advocates of total abstinence, are yet ready to join with them in measures for restricting the sale of alcoholic liquors. Public sentiment on this subject has advanced to a stage that requires something to be done. Social reformers of every school unite in their demands to do something, and wish by legislative interference to secure more or less complete prohibition of the traffic. A powerful organisation of wealthy manufacturers, joined by the publicans of the country, exists to oppose any reform, and churches as well as civic boards are to a large extent in league with the drink traffic. But in view of the awful misery which arises from the unlimited sale of drink, the time has arrived to meet the strength of that party, and overthrow it with the sovereign strength of popular authority. The duty of licensing establishments for the sale of drink should be entrusted to those who represent the people, and who are controlled by the people. The excessive number of such establishments



strikes the eye everywhere, no matter where you go, and every right-minded citizen deploras it; and my belief is, that if you throw the responsibility upon the people of putting down this great social evil and danger, the people will rise to the emergency. What we want is a carefully regulated traffic, taken out of the hands of private and self-interested parties, and managed by officials and governed by a body of men who will look steadily to the public good. Such popular control, when secured by the extension of local government, will duly restrict and may ultimately end, a traffic which indisputably produces among our people a rank and noisome crop of poverty, misery, disease, and crime. The experience of Christian communities proves that, wherever laws prohibiting the sale of strong drink have the sanction of public opinion, and are faithfully administered by the executive, not only have crime, lawlessness, and disorder been prevented, but peace, prosperity, education, and social well-being have been promoted.

Take, again, *the Sweating System* as another of our social problems.

It is one of the most repulsive phenomena that has been evolved out of the fierce competition of the existing state of things. A good deal of confusion



hangs over the subject, and this will be dispelled by the committee of the House of Lords which has been appointed to inquire into the working of the system. What is wanted is an accurate, and if possible a statistical, picture of the trades where the invention of sweating has gained a footing. It is carried on principally in the tailoring trade, and the several departments of sewing and needlework among women. The sweater is the middleman who comes between the workmen and the employer; he has often to supervise work that is unskilled and inferior, and where it is done in workshops he acts as the slavedriver, because much of the work done would be worthless if not subjected to his grinding supervision. The tide of life flows in from country districts to towns and cities. Cheap labour becomes plentiful as a consequence, and it is offered in such quantities as to have created the sweater and made him all-powerful. He becomes graded as the work is subdivided, and degraded as the work is sent out to be done in the back streets. Sometimes he has his own workshop, or he apportions the work to sub-sweaters, and these distribute it again among the destitutes. The profits of the system at its extreme end are so miserable that the lowest and

worst sweaters are said to make little more than a bare existence. But think of the many who are its victims ; think of all the competition, the crowding, and the misery. It turns men and women into nothing better than mere machines. It is a fact that dirt, overcrowding, and neglect of sanitary precautions, are the common incidents of the sweating-shops, and it is out of such places that furniture and readymade cloth palaces stock their windows with bargains. The demon of cheapness possesses all ranks, and seldom do purchasers give a thought to the blood and muscle that are ground up to furnish them with cheap goods. Things are not cheap which we buy at the price of human health and happiness, by the destruction of human life ; they are made costly beyond all reckoning. You remember Hood's lines—

“ O men with sisters dear,  
O men with mothers and wives,  
It is not linen you are wearing out,  
But human creatures' lives.”

Sweating in its worst form is extensively carried on not only in London, but in Glasgow, and towns little suspected of it. A contract was taken in Glasgow by a sweater to have seven hundred men's coats made for tenpence each. What did the actual makers earn per day at such work ? Shirt-finishing,

which includes making button - holes, sewing on buttons, and other details, is done at fourpence half-penny to sixpence per dozen, and only a very clever woman, working twelve, fifteen, or seventeen hours can do more than two dozen in a day.

This particular social grievance only represents one phase of an evil in the existing state of things—an evil which dooms its victims to long hours of toil, and starvation wages after all. It is a part of that competitive anarchy which is so injurious to all classes. Every person who was willing to work had a right to live, and if the conditions are such that, work as hard as he might, he could not live out of his pay, then there is something wrong in the conditions, and it is the duty of Christian people to set it right. No set of men has any inherent right to profits arising out of the misery and degradation of others. The old doctrine of political economy needs revision, viz., that labour must be satisfied with the amount of wages capital could give. The public conscience, enlightened by Christianity, says, “No; you are beginning at the wrong end; under no conceivable circumstances are starvation wages justifiable.” The first necessity of all is, that the labourer should have enough to keep body and soul together, and

if anything is left after that, let capital have it. Labour has the first claim to the fruits of labour. Moses says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," and the labouring ox should have his mouth free, and a hearty meal while he was working. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." The Christian Church ought not to rest until it has so reformed the conditions of labour all round, that it shall be impossible for iniquities like the sweating system to exist among us.

Take, once more, *the Better Housing of the Poor* as another social problem.

In labouring for the health and comfort of the poorer classes, the one great obstacle is found to be the insanitary condition of their abodes. A Royal Commission investigated this matter a few years ago, and disclosed an appalling state of things amongst a portion of the people in the large towns of this country. It showed too often wretched accommodation, high rents mercilessly exacted, total neglect by landlords of their duties to their tenants and of the general duties of property. A few facts will reveal this condition of things. *Life in One Room*, is the title of a pamphlet written by the Medical Officer of Health for the City of Glasgow,

and it informs us that 25 per cent. of the population live in single apartments, and 45 per cent. in two apartments; in other words, that 126,000 persons live in those one-roomed, and 228,000 in those two-roomed houses. The writer goes on to say that he can only venture to lift a corner of the curtain which veils the life that is lived in these houses; in fact, that it can only be pictured a little by the well-known passage in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*: "Oh, under that hideous coverlit of vapours, and putrefactions, and unimaginable gases, what a fermenting-vat lies simmering and hid! The joyful and sorrowful are there: men are dying there, men are being born: men are praying. On the other side of a brick partition men are cursing: and around them all is the vast void night. . . . Wretchedness cowers into truckle-beds, or shivers hunger-stricken into its lair of straw. . . . Riot cries aloud, and staggers and swaggers in his rank dens of shame; and the mother, with streaming hair, kneels over her pallid, dying infant, whose cracked lips only her tears now moisten. All these heaped and huddled together, with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them; crammed in like salted fish in their barrel; or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of

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tamed vipers, each struggling to get its head above the others ; such work goes on under that smoke-counterpane."

Some will say that these are the words of a screaming prophet, but let them gainsay, if they can, the words of that cool-headed statistician, Mr. R. Giffen, who speaks of the "residuum of five millions as a stain on our civilisation." Another says : "To me, at least, it would be enough to condemn modern society as hardly an advance on slavery or serfdom, if the permanent condition of industry were to be that which we behold, that 90 per cent. of the actual producers of wealth have no home that they can call their own beyond the end of the week ; have no bit of soil, or so much as a room that belongs to them ; have nothing of value of any kind except as much old furniture as will go in a cart ; have the precarious chance of weekly wages which barely suffice to keep them in health ; are housed for the most part in places that no man thinks fit for his horse ; are separated by so narrow a margin from destitution, that a month of bad trade, sickness, or unexpected loss, brings them face to face with hunger and pauperism." The physical evils of overcrowding are great, but the moral evils are greater still. And Lyon Playfair,



an old sanitary reformer, said not long ago that the causes of deterioration in Scotland are more powerful than the means of improving the social condition of the people. Physical and moral evils are bred of such social conditions as they live in. If they stew in closely packed dwellings, what can we expect to be the result? They can have few opportunities for healthy pleasures, and the public-house will be the only place where they can meet one another for good-fellowship. Misery drives to strong drink as well as strong drink to misery. If you take your children, put them into such hovels as are occupied by the poor, expose them to scenes of squalor, accustom them to profane and obscene talk, you know that most of them would turn out drunken, worthless men and women. But reverse the process, take the little wizened girls and little old men of boys that prowl in back courts away from such surroundings, give them plenty of food, treat them with kindness, teach them pure morals, and most of them would grow up to lead virtuous and useful lives.

Now, if such be largely the state of matters in town and country, then all who believe that the true being of the State is based upon the contentment and prosperity of the greatest number of its



citizens, must be concerned in bringing to an end a condition of things under which it is impossible for men to live decent Christian lives. "The solution of the social problems of the age," it has been truly said, "is for us the doing of something here and now."

The better housing of the poor should be set about at once, that the bare decencies of life may no longer be outraged as they are at present in houses of one or two rooms, and that disease, drunkenness, and crime, so largely the result of unwholesome dwellings, may be to a great extent lessened. Houses, certified by the officer of health to be unfit for human habitation, should not be let or occupied. Philanthropic organisations exist in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, for managing properties that can be made habitable, kept in thorough repair, and in a perfectly sanitary state, and yet yield five per cent. on capital invested. There is a Social Union in Edinburgh which undertakes this system, and thus explains it: "Each property is bought in the name of the owner, who takes the entire risk, after having the report of a practical builder, and a careful statement from the superintendents as to rental and probable expenses. The rents are collected weekly, by ladies and

gentlemen who undertake this task as a means of gaining influence among the tenants, and helping them with their counsel and sympathy. The principle is maintained throughout of bettering the condition of the poor, not by lowering their expenditure on rent, which would merely tend to depress the rate of wages, but by giving them greater value for their money, and thus accustoming them to a higher standard of comfort." The houses are let as cheaply as by former landlords, and are eagerly sought. Miss Octavia Hill has carried out this plan for years among the London poor, and recommends its wider adoption, saying, "Unite the loving-kindness of the friend to the control of the landlord, and whether by gradual improvement of court, or wise management of block, you will rule a kingdom in righteousness, and help to eradicate evil by slow but thorough ways." Other effectual remedies must be put into operation. Local bodies should have the duty imposed upon them of acquiring and demolishing all premises that are distinctly insanitary and bad, and should erect buildings that are suitable for the class that would inhabit them. Such dwellings would belong to the people, because the town authorities are merely the representatives of the people, and

administer the rates they raise for the people, and in owning the houses they would hold them in the name of the people, and the people would virtually become the owners of a large proportion of the houses which they occupy. It is to be hoped that new extensions of Local Government will lead to such improvements. Indeed, the solution must be deeper and wider still, for John Stuart Mill says with truth that "it is the great error of reformers and philanthropists in our time to nibble at the consequences of unjust power instead of redressing the injustice itself." An easy transfer of lands and houses is one of the most beneficial reforms connected with the amenity of life among the people. In former days land belonged to the people equally, but now it has got unfortunately into a few hands, and the people are disinherited. If the primitive township had been not only retained, but developed to meet its growing wants, the land round about it would have been its own, and there would have been ample space over which to spread. According to the present system, when the trade of a town increases and the population needs housing, land rises to an exorbitant price, and the result is that the working man has no garden, not even a decent-sized house, for which he must pay an enormous

rent. There must be a return to what all primitive communities regarded as a common right to the soil. Every township should be empowered to purchase or lease an ample stretch of ground, paying the landlord a fair but not a fancy price for it, because property in land is recognised by us, and established by law; and on this ground people should have the right to build houses, and have a secure title without the absurd but expensive formalities of conveyancing and title-deeds. In the local authority is furnished a perfect instrument for the registration and transfer of lands and houses, so that all you should have to do would be to go to the register office in the town or district, make an entry in a book, hand over the money for the land, and transact the business in five or ten minutes. No deeds would be necessary, nor expenses except a small fee to the registrar, and thus one of the great obstacles to the possession of land in small quantities by the people for building and other purposes would be completely swept away. Laws should be passed to enforce sanitary inspection and prevent it from being the farce it now is, and to enable the building of healthy houses, and provide plenty of recreation grounds in every town.

Such are a few of the social grievances that con-

stitute a scandal and menace in this our beloved land. Do they exist in our towns and villages? If we except the sweating system, it is no exaggeration to say that they appear among us in acute and shameful forms. Poverty hangs about the corners of the streets in rags; drunkenness holds its carnival in drinking saloons every Saturday night; and miserable hovels of the poor abound in back quarters of our towns. There are citizens who think their towns to be no worse than other towns, and count it an offence to utter a disparaging word. It is possible to do like ostriches, bury our head in the sand, and see no danger. I daresay the men who of old made long prayers "reported that, on the whole, Jewish society was in a far more healthy state than in the days of the Maccabees, crimes fewer, poverty more scarce, and work more abundant," and said hard things against the Prophet of Galilee for harping so much about the needs of the poor. It would be wise did some of these optimists in easy circumstances take a tour of inspection through the streets on a Saturday night, or visit the back-lands and closes any time, noon or night. We have slums and rookeries in country towns where hundreds of our population herd together in single-roomed houses, in foul air and out

of sight of nature, under conditions which render common decency impossible. We have drunkards to be a shame and a terror to the streets; we have brutes of men and women who crush out the happiness of home and send forth their offspring to be the pest of the community. There is clamant need to know these things, and deal with them. Let us break the ice of stagnation and selfishness that has frozen over the community as to this state of things. It is right to diagnose correctly our social diseases; it is a noble thing to gather all these up into our own spirit as a vicarious burden, and according to the light we have to discover and apply the healing balm. There is no hope for people held in the grip of poor, intemperate, and ill-housed conditions, "unless the Church, which is the healing hand of Christ, becomes the motive power in society, directing our rulers to wise public measures, and stirring the hearts of individuals to private beneficence." Let us know that we are partially responsible for every insanitary dwelling in the town. For part of true religion consists in honestly contemplating the misery that is not far off any of us, and looking at it through the compassionate eyes of Jesus Christ. It consists also in securing laws which will absolutely prohibit social



evils, and in electing to positions of authority men who will see those laws enforced. An old Greek once said, "I cannot play on any stringed instrument, but I can show you how out of a little village to make a great and glorious city." I know not how he meant to do it; but this I know, that if with better social surroundings we could only bring Christ and His gospel nearer to the hearts of the men and women and children of our town, we might help to make it a part of the city of God.

The socialist is wont to view these problems as exclusively material, and to work on for a change of conditions, for a better social environment, and is often bitterly disappointed with the result. The Christian is wont to view these problems, again, as exclusively spiritual, and to work on for a change of character, for the soul's conversion; but he fails to recognise that the conditions in which multitudes are compelled to live are such as, whatever our natures are capable of, tend to brutalize us. There is a moral element in good housing, pure air, and open spaces, which ought not to be overlooked or despised. But let the Socialist and Christian be rolled into one—into the Christian Socialist; then let him come to the feet of Jesus, and learn from Him the cure of social woes. Christ came to com-



bine the internal and external, to heal the bodies and souls of men. Spirit and matter co-existing in Him could and should be everywhere in happy accord.

“Inward evermore  
To outward,—so in life, and so in art,  
Which still is life.”

It is part of His teaching, “He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also.” The works that He did in the days of His humiliation were works of healing on the bodies of men, and these are still to be done by His followers, and Christ is still the spring of power there. “And greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father.” These greater works are conversions in the inner world of souls, and Christ is the spring of power there also. The faith that makes Christ ours, in a rich and co-operating community of action and of life, should give evidence of itself in blessed changes, alike of character and condition. From the congregation of pitiful hearts Christ draws round Himself, healing virtue for body and soul should go out through a thousand arts and appliances to the weary, suffering world. Christianity is called upon once more to show its title-deeds, and this claim of the age can only be answered when a sense of community with universal

suffering shall seize Christian hearts, and make their efforts widen out to the amelioration of social disorders. Let us find, then, our divinest duties in trying to improve the lot of the masses, in recognising the great moral value of a healthy material environment, and working for it. Let us do what we can to lessen poverty by substituting wise personal sympathy for doles of charity, to dry up the sources of vice, to abolish the destructive fierceness of competition, to create decent homes instead of hovels that breed disease, and make purity of life impossible ; and so give the conclusive answer to those who question the validity of our gospel, "Go your way, and tell John the things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he who shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me."

## IX.

### *THE GOSPEL AND SOCIALISM—THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH.*

A CALIFORNIAN recently left four millions to his heirs, yet with all his wealth he brought up his three sons to work. Did he do so to guard them against the perils of being rich idlers, or in obedience to the truth of the New Testament rule, "This we command you, That if any would not work, neither should he eat"? If such had been his motive, it would have proved him to be a wise father; but he gave another reason for doing so. He had closely observed the industrial classes both on his own continent and in Europe, and came to the conclusion that within twenty years property in the ordinary sense, as wealth independent of labour, would cease to exist in all civilised States. Whether that conviction be well founded or not, we do not pronounce; we may say that it was rather hastily arrived at; but it is interesting because it puts forcibly a seminal thought now all in the air, and

finding an entrance into many minds, that the inequality between rich and poor needs to be redressed, and that there ought to be a fairer distribution of the good things of life. Ideas about property are fermenting everywhere, and Christian teachers should be alive to their importance. Tennyson represents his "Northern Farmer" as a man with the words "property, property, property," ringing inside of him, while the parson makes a noise like a buzzard clock over his head in church. Too often the voice of the pulpit goes past like an empty sound, when it should speak to men's business and bosom. Herbert Spencer complains that all he learns from the pulpit is to give a little to the poor. Such counsel, good enough in its way, does not go to the root of the matter. It is the Church's duty to apply its gospel teaching to methods for the production and distribution of wealth. Among the most thoughtful adherents of socialism it is held that the cardinal principle behind all phases of their movement is an economic one, and that it is a general movement of the age, not likely to be arrested till it end in the distribution by the community of all wealth, according to its ideas of justice and equity, for the general good. Now,

there is such a thing as Christian economics ; a close relation exists between political economy and religious ideas. Christian principles should be extended and translated into economical facts, as they once were, by the abolition of slavery, into social facts. Were this secured, social and economical improvement would be promoted. The gospel alone reconciles the antagonism of classes by filling men's hearts with a sense of justice, brotherhood, and mutual help. A more vital Christianity in its social aspects would heal the distempers and remove the inequalities of our present state.

On every side the conviction is rising into strength, that we are a long way off yet from the arrangement of society on principles of strict fairness, and on every side aspirations for a better construction of society are expressed. Men like Canon Westcott tell us that the problems which the coming generation will have to face are problems of wealth and poverty, of luxury and want, of capital and labour, and that they cannot be solved irrespectively of the Christian faith. Many in the community are thinking about problems of social politics, though not clearly, and therefore with some measure of alarm ; leading

statesmen declare that the published programme of such a man as John Burns, the champion of the London strikers, could, with the exception of an eight hours bill, be endorsed by the Liberal party as a whole; candidates for parliamentary honours are carrying the constituencies everywhere on advanced social programmes, and confirming the inference that, as many social schemes and theories have been wrought out by past governors of the country in their interests, so larger measures will be wrought out by future governors of the country, and in a more rapid and thorough way, for the public good; the ranks of "Christian Socialism" increase in number and strength, as inquirers find that it abjures the policy of plunder, and exchanges the old cry of "Down with everything that is up," for the new and better one, "Up with everything that is down."

It is felt by many who try to grapple with social grievances that they must go a long way in the spirit of reform, and adopt something else than ordinary cures and temporary palliatives. In a little book on *Practicable Socialism*, by the Rev. and Mrs. Samuel Barnett of East London, he says: "Some time ago I met in a tramcar a well-known American clergyman. 'Ah,' said he, 'ten years,

work as a minister at large made me a Christian socialist.' The remark illustrates my experience. Ten years ago my wife and I came to East London. The study of political economy and some familiarity with the poor had shown us the harm of doles, given in the shape either of charity or outdoor relief. We found that gifts so given did not make the poor any richer, but served rather to perpetuate poverty." Charitable and philanthropic efforts do not touch the bottom of our social disorders, he confesses, and says that attention must be turned to the problem of the distribution of wealth. Inquiry into causes, and application of remedies, alike throw us back on present economic and industrial relations. The older political economy concerned itself chiefly with the production and accumulation of wealth, and sought to lay the foundations of a science and art of commerce, considering labour as a commodity; the newer economy regards chiefly the welfare of the working classes, and turns its attention to the proper use and distribution of wealth. The laws, neither of the one nor of the other, should be spoken of as if they were laws of nature—the doctrine of *laissez-faire* having been upset by much of recent legislation; they are simply a department of social

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ethics, whose data vary from age to age, and have different bearings in different countries and at different epochs.

How, then, shall a larger share of wealth go to relieve the masses of mankind, and make common among them the good things confined to the few? There can be no doubt that great progress in the comfort and well-being of the people has taken place under the present industrial system during the last sixty or seventy years. Before that period the working classes of this country had low wages, few comforts of life, and could not lay by savings for their old age. Wages might be still higher than they are, but they have increased fifty per cent. during the last seventy years, and the working man has shorter hours of labour, giving less work in return as to time, though not as to effect. The skilled artisan gets better remuneration for his labour, as it improves in quality; while improvements in machinery have greatly reduced the price of commodities, enabling common labourers to buy sixty-six per cent., factory operatives seventy-eight per cent., and skilled mechanics ninety per cent. more of the necessities of life with a single day's wage. Machinery, by displacing labour, at the first seems cruel to the

working man, and does occasion individual hardship for a while; but by devolving upon brute power that does not suffer the most oppressive part of labour, it proves an enormous blessing to the mass of the population, by lowering the cost of production and furnishing cheap articles to the whole community. Much has also been done by combination of workmen to give value to their labour in the market. Masters could combine as much as they liked, but workmen could not lay their heads together, and make common cause. This right has been won, however, and it enables them to do much for themselves in securing a fair remuneration for their labour. Seventy years ago there were savings banks, confined, however, almost to one class, the class of domestic servants; now in post office savings banks, only six-and-twenty years in existence, there are sixty millions of the people's money, while the friendly societies that provide against sickness and death show what means and resources the people have and can lay up for themselves by carefulness and forethought.

Do not these benefits of the present order contain a record greatly to commend it, and prove what not a few wise men teach, that the interests of capital and labour are not antagonistic, but

identical, and their blessings mutual? We *have not the whole problem before us*, when we confine our gaze to this picture. There are great and grievous features of the existing system which wise men of all schools and parties regard as inherent characteristics of that system. Canon Westcott thus writes in his book on *Social Aspects of Christianity*: “We are suffering on all sides, and we know that we are suffering, from a tyrannical individualism. This reveals itself in social life by the pursuit of personal pleasure; in commercial life by the admission of the principle of unlimited competition; in our theories of life by the acceptance of material standards of prosperity and progress. Nor is it difficult to see why this should be so. The silent revolution which has taken place within the century in the methods of production and distribution has terribly intensified the evils which belong to all late forms of civilisation. The great industries have cheapened luxuries and stimulated the passion for them. They have destroyed the human fellowship of craftsman and chief. They have degraded trade, in a large degree, into speculation. They have deprived labour of its thoughtful freedom, and turned men into ‘hands.’ They have given capital a power of

dominion and growth perilous above all to its possessor." Such is the indictment of a thoughtful observer and great Christian scholar, and hardly any socialist could put it stronger against the industrial system of our era. This grave problem of the distribution of wealth, we are told on every side, is an economic one, and its solution must be found in some modification or change of economic method. It has been the tendency of the present system to become a great profit-grinding machine, in which those who are weak go to the wall, and those who are strong get a lion's share of the spoil. It has tended to enrich the few and impoverish the many, to give the privileged few power to exact as large a profit as they can, irrespective of the condition of the men who make the profit. The annual income of the country is estimated at about 1250 millions, of which 450 millions go to satisfy the claims of land and capital, 350 millions go to those above the manual labour class, and 450 millions go to the manual labourers, or three-fifths of the working population. About 10 millions of the population receive annually the sum of 800 millions, while 450 millions are allotted to 25 millions of the manual labour class. It appears, then, that an enormous share is taken from the

produce of the nation by possessors of the instruments of industry, which leads to the small incomes of the workers, and renders it impossible for them to command the means of culture and happiness which they ought to have. Adam Smith has shown that labour is the only source of wealth, and without labour no wealth whatever can be produced, and yet the toiling millions who make that wealth are comparatively poor. Many of them live on the verge of starvation, while a few monopolists pile up huge fortunes, and large numbers have more than they can use. The contrast between wealth and poverty has always been observed, but it is phenomenal in our day. Plato said that in every city there were, face to face, two hostile classes, the rich and the poor; and Lord Beaconsfield says that the unequal distribution of the fruits of industry divides us into "two nations," who differ widely from each other in security, education, and comfort. So long ago as 1843, Mr. Gladstone said in the House of Commons: "It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of our country that a constant accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, and an increase of the luxuriousness of living, should be accompanied by a decrease in the

consuming powers of the people, and an increase of the pressure of privation and distress among the poorer classes." Although production has been stimulated beyond measure, and aided by immense supplies of food from abroad, the golden age of plenty seems as far away from the labourer as ever, and he has still to wage a constant war against penury and want. And there is another war—a war of suspicion and discontent between the "two nations;" that antagonism between the classes and the masses, between the Haves and the Have-nots, so deep-seated as to be a continual menace to peace and prosperity, and so grievous that, according to the Bishop of Rochester, "the zones of enormous wealth and degrading poverty, unless carefully considered, will presently generate a tornado which, when the storm clears, may leave a good deal of wreckage behind." No system which results in a few millionaires at one end of the scale, and a million of paupers at the other, can be regarded by any man as fair or desirable; and a sense of justice which, as Chateaubriand says, is "the bread of nations," unites with the dictates of prudence and the promptings of philanthropy in a desire to obtain for the labourers a larger share in the fruits of their labour. How comes it to pass that, with



such triumphs of mechanical contrivance and such unexampled wealth and prosperity, so many of the workers are reduced to the bare necessities of life? How is it that Great Britain, which weaves cloth enough to put a girdle round the globe, should have multitudes of ill-clad men, women, and children? Is it because labour does not produce enough? Never were the powers of production so stupendous. Is it due to existing economic conditions? According to many, the present order is credited with the enormous accumulations of wealth in this country, and therefore is regarded as something sacred, as a law of nature, and the foundation of our national supremacy in the paths of commerce. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* has full swing in all departments, and good service did it render when restraints of the severest kind were swept away, and freedom of trade was secured. It is the doctrine of "let alone." "Leave things to themselves; let them go on as they are doing. Give full scope to individual interest and enterprise. Let there be full liberty, and the economic laws will operate like laws of nature." Such was the contention of the old political economy, and the contention has been so far made good by the marvellous development of industry and opulence



that has followed. But the doctrine of *laissez-faire* is not the whole truth. Granting that it has been the condition, or even the cause, of our commercial greatness, it has only succeeded in solving the problem of the production of wealth, but affords no aid in solving the problem of the distribution of wealth. It is possible, on examination, to discover that it may have helped the present crisis of deepening poverty surrounded by the abundant wealth which labour has created. For existing economic methods are not to be regarded either as laws of nature or as practically the same throughout the ages. They are human and social arrangements, only fixed and normal as they are based on the eternal law of righteousness. They are a phase in the evolution of society more or less permanent, and may be destined to pass away before some larger and nobler readjustment.

The industrial system that prevails is comparatively a thing of yesterday. It did not exist a few centuries ago. Sociologists point out a number of stages in the progress of society. There was a period when no private possession of land existed, when original ownership belonged to the tribe or the community. The Jewish people, and not any private class, were owners of the Holy Land, and

every jubilee restitution of the soil was made to the tribes. The prophet Isaiah knows nothing about land laws, but teaches that God made the land not to feed the pride of the few, but the natural hunger of the many, and pronounces "woe unto them that join house to house, and lay field to field." In India, China, and Japan, the land belongs to the people. During the middle ages, under the feudal system, slavery had been superseded by serfdom as the form of labour. The serf was bound to the soil, and had a rough, poor existence, though he was not much worse off than his lord in castle hall; but he had a fixed interest in the soil, and there was something of comradeship between him and his lord. In industrial pursuits, each craft had its guild, and the relations between master and workmen were still more personal and friendly. For a long period no great division between classes existed, and the master worked with his men, lived with them, and the workmen who gathered a little capital easily rose to the position of masters. At that time apprentice, journeyman, and master described the three stages in the career of a worker. With the downfall of feudalism a change in the tenure of land was introduced, and the people were driven from the

soil, and were either driven into the towns, or reduced to service with low wages and restraints on their freedom. The people were disinherited by a system of private ownership of land. About the middle of last century the present commercialism came into vogue. It began with the invention of the spinning-jenny by Hargreave, of the spinning-machine by Arkwright, and of the steam-engine by Watt, all within twelve years of each other; and they have given rise to the greatest revolution in industry the world has known—a revolution that has won supremacy for England in all the markets of the world. At the same time, however, this industrial system, under one-sided economic conditions, has led to the concentration of wealth in a few hands and the divorce of the workers from the instruments of production. The spoils of labour have gone to a privileged order, and those who labour do not get the remuneration they deserve. They have been disestablished and disendowed of their proper reward by an imperfect economic arrangement, whereby labour is bought in the market for wages, and the wages are determined not so much by the amount or value of the work as by its scarcity or plenty. Cobden explained the condition of wages in a single sentence :

“When two men ask work from one employer, wages are low ; when two employers are after one man, wages are high.” Where abundance of labour is found, this iron law sends down wages to a bare subsistence, and causes that most disheartening and demoralising of all material evils—insecurity in the means of living.

The present industrial order is founded on *Individualism* as opposed to *Socialism*.

To the Reformation we owe an assertion of the freedom and independence of the individual, and, when fairly recognised, it is a noble right; in a one-sided and exaggerated form it is a marked feature of this industrial era, and gives to it the name of Individualism. The policy which it pursues is that of “let alone;” its economic law is said to operate, like the laws of nature, with unvarying and necessary sequence. “Leave things to work of themselves, and all will come right.” It is the Darwinian law of “struggle for existence” carried up into the economic world; it is the survival of the fittest, and the fittest are the strongest, and the strongest are those best armed to win the day. Down in the lower world it meant the strong snatching food from the weak, the fierce clearing the field so effectively as to leave nothing for the

rest; it meant the ichthyosaurs preying on the smaller denizens of the waters and the big mammoths goring their rivals to death. Something of this kind marks the industrial world: here the strongest succeed, the men of best physique, the most intelligent and sagacious, it may be also the most cunning and unscrupulous; here the best armed vanquish, the men of largest material advantages and greatest hereditary wealth. The result is that a few powerful individuals monopolise the instruments of production, have an autocratic control of industries, and obtain the lion's share of the spoils. While the individualism of the one is exaggerated, the individuality of the many suffers loss. By the divorce of the workers from raw materials and implements of work, they are reduced to a dependent, helpless, and precarious mode of life. They have freedom, but lack security. Freedom consists in offering his labour at a discount, and in dying of hunger if his labour is not wanted. Freedom of contract: what is it without capital but just to accept whatever conditions may be imposed? Freedom of labour: what is it except the competition of labour, and a reduction of wages to the lowest point?

Now if Malthus, Darwin, and Herbert Spencer

be the apostles of individualism, and say that for the weak and oppressed there is no cover at the banquet of life, Christianity, in the name of justice and brotherhood, protests against this state of things, holds out a hand to the weak, and indicates a place for the oppressed. That the weak should give place to the strong may be the ethic of nature, but it is the ethic neither of human nature nor of Christ. The ethic of Christ is that the strong should help the weak, and the fit-to-live should make the unfit fit to live. He asserts the proper individuality and inherent worth of every man; but while His gospel is individualistic, still more is it socialistic. He preached a social gospel; He proclaimed the social law of God. And socialism in its best form claims to be an application of Christ's ethical teaching to the entire social and economic order, an application that will develop true individuality all round, and not ignore it anywhere. It is often charged with attempting to abolish the institution of property, and tending to crush out all individuality, but it seeks to do the reverse. "Instead of taking away property from everybody, it will enable everybody to acquire property. It will truly sanctify the institution of individual ownership by placing property on an



unimpeachable basis, that of being the result of one's individual exertions. Thereby it will afford the very mightiest stimulus for individuality to unfold itself. Property will belong to its possessor by the strongest of all titles, to be enjoyed as he thinks proper, but not to be used as an instrument of fleecing his fellow-citizens."

The present industrial order is founded on *Self-interest* as opposed to *Self-sacrifice*.

"One's own interest," says the old school of economy, "is the main and rightful moving principle, of which we ought not to let sentimental moralists make us ashamed;" and the defence it used to make was, that the laws of the market which individual interest generates would tend best to the universal benefit. Experience has not proved this, and surely for every one to seek only his own interest cannot secure general welfare. Count Tolstoi, in one of his works, illustrates the present situation. "People come to a farm; they find there all that is necessary to sustain life, a house well furnished, barns filled with grain, store-rooms well provisioned, implements of husbandry, horses and cattle—in a word, all that is needed for a life of comfort and ease. Each wishes to profit by this abundance, but each for himself,



without thinking of others ; each wants the whole for himself. Then begins a veritable pillage ; they fight for the possession of the spoils ; they grasp more than they can consume. No one is able to sit down to the tranquil enjoyment of what he has, lest another take away the spoils. All these people leave the farm, bruised and famished. Thereupon the master puts things to rights, stocks the farm again, and another group of seekers comes to do as before. The good master still provides all that is needed to sustain life, and the same thing occurs over and over again. A wise man comes to the farm—none other than God in person—and tells them, as everything is in abundance, to act reasonably, and instead of robbing each other to help one another. If they will work, plant, and care for one another, every one will be satisfied. But the many will not believe the wise man or follow his advice, and continue the policy of self-interest, might and main.” There is a higher principle, when you come to man, than the law of natural selection, whose keynote is, “ Let the strong trample out the weak,” and its keynote is, “ Let the strong sacrifice themselves for the weak.” The law of the cross, which is the law of ministration, of sympathy, of self-sacrifice, is the teaching

of One who "being in the form of God," made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, to raise our lives to His own level. His gospel holds up to our eyes an ideal of social order as the kingdom of heaven, which is meant to teach the power of social relationships and social obligations in the whole life of man—in commerce, politics, and religion. It is said that the doctrine of Christian ethics cannot be applied to human life as it now is—that however desirable, it is not practicable. The Bishop of Peterborough said lately that it was impossible to construct society on the law of the Sermon on the Mount. It is a sad confession for a spiritual peer of the realm to make in this year of his Lord and ours. It is a comfort to know that Mr. Cobden declared his politics to be the politics of the Sermon on the Mount. If you push the principle of self-interest, pure and simple, and make it supreme over the life of a being capable of self-sacrifice, you only degrade him to the level of the world beneath, and arrest at a blow his highest step of progress. The present industrialism has so trampled on the interests of others, and gone to such excesses in the degradation of the workers, that Factory Acts and numerous measures of State-control have been

required to keep it in check. It needs to be moralised as well as to be socialised; it needs to be made subservient to moral law; it should be placed on a basis of justice, brotherhood, and regard for the public good. Business to-day is wrong. It rests on the negation of social law and self-sacrifice; it is the exact opposite of Christianity, which says, "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's good." There is a higher ideal in life than that of getting on, and being first in the race for wealth. The desire for huge accumulations is a survival from the lower world. It is nobler for the strong and wealthy to sacrifice themselves for the weak, and not only pour out of their coffers what may be needed for those in want, but unite so to arrange the economic resources of the nation that every man shall have access to all the common privileges which make life worth living—health, education, leisure, culture, plenty for every individual—all of which go to make a great and happy nation.

The present industrial order is founded on *Competition* as opposed to *Co-operation*.

Individualism, self-interest, competition—these three mark our existing commercial position, and under the name of private enterprise reign

supreme. The success of the competitive system depends on cheap labour and improved machinery, and of both it may be said to have a plentiful supply. It is a necessity of the system that wages be lowered as much as possible. Competition compels the employer to get his labour-force at cost price — at subsistence wages. It is necessary to diminish the cost of production and save the margin of profit. In this way it leads to the degradation of labour. The worker is exploited and enslaved by the system which regards him as a machine. It is not the fault of the individual capitalist. He may be a kind and honourable man, and would sacrifice much to benefit the workers; but he cannot help himself. It is often a matter of life and death to him. It is the vice of the system. Cattle are counted by heads, but workers are counted only by hands. A pity it is that God did not make them only hands, but they have wills and consciences too, that bid them rebel against such subjection, and demand more equitable treatment. Hence the chronic war between capital and labour, ever appealing to the costly and dangerous arbitrament of strikes and lockouts. Much may be done to mitigate the fierceness of the conflict. Trades unions have enabled the workers to hold their own

against an unfair system, but at best they only "secure a working truce and not a permanent peace." The wise generosity of masters has also done much to soften the harshness and tone down the discord which exists. Christianity, even under a wrong system, counsels wise moderation, and when trade improves, advises the employers to be generous in allowing to those whom they employ a full share of the improvement, and when trade declines it advises the workmen to be moderate. The struggle thus varies in form, and may be modified by kindly and considerate dealing, but it remains essentially the same in economic character.

Not only does the competitive system divide employer and employed, but among the employers themselves it creates a struggle so fierce as to be a kind of internecine war. The smaller employers in almost every department of industry have been displaced by the greater; they have been driven from the field, or compelled to seek work in the establishment that has superseded them. So keen is the competition that the margin of profit has become extremely small, and the competitors have to put forth all their wits and efforts to outflank and undersell one another; the hand of the one is against the other, and no foe is more terrible than

the one who runs a neck-to-neck race with the other every day. The evils of competition have thus been summarised: it "gluts our markets, enables the rich to take advantage of the necessities of the poor, makes each man snatch the bread out of his neighbour's mouth, converts a nation of brethren into a mass of hostile, isolated units, and finally involves capitalists and labourers in one common ruin."<sup>1</sup>

Since the pressure of work lies with increasing weight upon the worker, and competition grows keener every year, with its evils aggravated as a natural result, the question arises: Can no system be devised or principle conceived to check this social anarchy, and introduce a more equitable condition of things? Capitalists and labourers are alike held in the grip of a competitive and tyrannous individualism; we are all caught in its toils. Then should we not all, in a spirit of self-sacrifice and love for the public good, unite to consider any method which would make more common the good things which wealth has gained for the few? Our present system needs not only to be socialised and moralised, but likewise to be nationalised. Reformers of every school perceive

<sup>1</sup> Greg.



that this, with greater or less scope, must be their object. Such an aim inspires not only the Christian philanthropist and the socialistic propagandist, but every man who wants to see a great and prosperous people. A reconstruction of society in which there shall be no churlish rich and no discontented poor, in which the desire of every one is "Give me neither poverty nor riches," in which there is neither too little nor too much, but enough for each of work and leisure and enjoyment—such is the Christian and social ideal. Better to strive after that worthily, and fail in the effort, than die a millionaire.

To secure such an object, the system that prevails must be modified or changed. Business must be founded on social principle. Co-operation must take the place of competition; we must have a system of industry carried on, not for private profits, but for the public good. Christianity should be applied to the social order. Instead of the gospel of individual push, let us have the gospel of mutual help. Instead of this private and disorderly scramble for gold, let us seek the honourable distinction of striving to promote every man another's wealth.

We are all agreed up to this point. With the



Christian ideal of social order in our hearts, and in sight of the economic world ruled by a hard law of competition, which is the brute struggle for existence, we are sure that co-operation for existence must be so much higher and better. Lord Derby spoke lately to the Rochdale Chamber of Commerce, and said that the co-operative system, which had already achieved so remarkable a success, was in his judgment a better remedy than any yet proposed for what he called the great and threatening evil which is upon us—the chronic war between capital and labour. Rochdale is the birthplace of the co-operative movement, for it began there in 1844 with twenty-eight poor weavers, and now has about a million members. It has made rapid progress in France, Germany, Italy, and Belgium. Many look to it as the equitable method, under wider applications, for transforming the entire field of industry. There can be no doubt that the co-operative plan has been a great success as a distributive enterprise, but in the productive line one must sorrowfully confess that its efforts have not been encouraging, nor are its remedial prospects bright. The advantages of co-operative societies in this direction have not been positively shown to be

either great or lasting. Two great obstacles stand in the way. Co-operation is handicapped on all sides by having to make its way in a society based on competition, and having a monopoly of capital. For production under the present system a larger capital is needed than workers have at command, and where they depend on borrowed money, it is too often suddenly withdrawn in times of panic. Still further, syndicates of workmen have not shown themselves better at handling the means of production than individualists. They may be men perfectly honest, but not capable in point of intelligence or organising efficiency. Or they may have capable men in the management of business, but not honest, who fatten themselves on the profits.

In face of these difficulties, many are coming to think that an economic change of a more thorough kind is requisite—that the means of production should somehow be placed under social and public control, with the view of obtaining a fair participation in the fruits of labour for the whole community. “Now, it is the contention of socialism that, in the evolution of society, a period has come requiring the transition into a higher and wider form of organisation, economical, social, and

political; a society embodying a nobler ethical ideal, a free democracy with a fit and suitable industrial system; a form of society which will better adapt the mechanical achievements of the industrial revolution to the service of man, for the wider extension of freedom, happiness, and culture.”<sup>1</sup> The socialistic programme has been thought out by men of keen intellects, such as Karl Marx and Lasalle on the Continent, and John S. Mill in this country, who says: “The form of association which, if mankind continue to improve, must be expected in the end to predominate, is not that which can exist between a capitalist as chief and workpeople without a voice in the management, but the association of the labourers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves.” In its best aim, socialism means a wise use of the forces of all for the good of each, and the legal protection of the weak against the strong; and to secure this aim it proposes an economic change that shall put land and capital under collective ownership and control. It maintains that land and all the resources of the

<sup>1</sup> Kirkup's *Inquiry into Socialism*.

earth, should be held as the gift of God equally to all His children, and that capital and all means of industry should be managed in some way by the community as a whole, and operated for the public good in all its parts. Under this system property would not be abolished, but the nation would become sole landlord and capitalist. There would be no private property in the means of production, but only in the means of enjoyment. Each would have awarded to him the full fruits of his labour, and according to the work done. If this *régime* of collective ownership and production were carried out, the plutocracy and proletariat would disappear, and with them the capitalist and wage-earning classes, and all the painful contrasts between wealth and poverty.

Such is the socialist programme, and when such immense changes of the industrial and social structure are mentioned, we lift up our hands in amazement, and ask how these things can be. Many who acknowledge the enormous accumulation of capital in a few hands to be unfair, would rather submit to it as a necessary evil, beyond prevention, than commit themselves to this collective programme. They discard it as an optimist illusion, a dream of Utopia; however desirable,

yet utterly impracticable. I do not commit myself to such a proposal; but as a Christian, hoping for a divine society to be founded on self-sacrifice and the brotherhood of man, I claim to be perfectly open-minded, and decline to be much moved by old cries of illusion and impracticability. All great reforms have had to face that cannonade. If the assumption and administration of land and capital by the State or the community, or both, be against human nature, then such a plan will come to naught. If it does not preserve all the good points of the private competitive system—if it ignores the original inequality of human gifts, and the variety of personal aptitudes, and the incentives to individual effort, then it has not a chance of success. The main objection against it is, that the attempt to carry it out could only produce convulsion and disaster. Now, were such to be the result, that would be a fatal difficulty. There must be no violence, no confiscation, no revolution, even though the land may have to be nationalised, and a competitive system give way to a co-operative commonwealth. But the wisest heads among socialists are ceasing to be anarchists, and along with them many Christian and social reformers are beginning to see a more excellent

way to the equal distribution of the fruits of industry. We do not believe in revolution so much as in evolution. In the early days of geology, there were students who thought all changes to be cataclysmal and volcanic, but in course of time the school of uniformists rose up, and demonstrated that those changes were due to the constant action of the ordinary forces of nature. In like manner we say that the revolutionary aim—that of sudden cataclysms and social upheavals—is not the right method, and would only be destructive. I do not believe in short cuts to the millennium. Society cannot be transformed by a few bold strokes of the magician's wand. The transformation can only come in obedience to slow processes of social growth. Evolution—that great word of modern science—must hold here, and win the day. If the aim of socialism come through the evolution of society, then you can no more stop it than Canute could stop the wave. Those who believe in going forward by reform, and not by revolution, differ in their estimate of the time required to change the existing *régime*. Rodbertus thought it would take five centuries, Lasalle said two, and a very remarkable book, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*,



pictures the new social order in full force at the close of the twentieth century. The conditions of social life vary from age to age. The present industrial system is but of yesterday, and may be gone in less time than it has taken to grow up. And there are forces at work and dominant to make it evident that the existing is not a normal and permanent order—not an organic system at all, but a transitional stage of development, a preparation for some higher and better order. The whole drift of events is towards a new economic, industrial, and social *régime*. The political question is settled; we have democracy. The social question remains, and the rise of democracy makes its solution simple and near. Politically, the working classes are our masters, our rulers; industrially, they are dependants. They have the power of choosing legislators and making laws, while they have no property, and their wages are kept low and insecure by a tyrannous competition. With the progress of democracy it is not difficult to foresee that this irritation cannot continue, and that there will be greater equality. As the workers are better educated and organised, great changes of a social and economic order will take place. The school-



master is abroad ; free education has been granted ; in another generation we shall have an understanding people, more intelligent to know the evils of society, and better acquainted with their rights. The workers are better organised. Trades unions have succeeded in raising wages, and procuring the great boon of a nine hours working day ; they aim at uniting the workers into one compact, comprehensive body ; and what many have desired for years, the free and voluntary organisation of labour, has been seen in this year of grace, when skilled labour threw itself heart and soul into the ranks of unskilled labour. Such combinations, along with the great friendly societies, diffuse among the members a sense that their interests are mutual, and so they become powerful instruments in preparing for future industrial changes. Lord Bramwell put the social question in a nutshell when he said, “ When men are as honest as bees, we may have socialism—not till then.” But organisation of labour, all along the lines, will teach the workmen the highest experience and skill, concentration of power, real and efficient control, a national aim and spirit, and far more true responsibility.

Other great tendencies towards a new order are

among us, at work under our eyes. There is at present a great movement in favour of the State undertaking duties from which it has hitherto held aloof. It began with the factory legislation, initiated by Lord Shaftesbury fifty years ago, to curb the insatiate greed of manufacturers, and its progress towards increased activity has continued ever since. The purpose to use the power of the State for the good of the vast majority of the people, is a great factor of our epoch. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* got knocked on the head when the post office and telegraph, mining and factory, and other industrial operations were placed under national control. The State has also taken in charge the education of the young. In some countries the railways have been assumed, and provision made against accidents and want in old age. One social activity after another has been concentrated by the State, till some begin to fear that this evolution of things may transform every citizen into a grown-up baby, and destroy that spirit of self-reliance needed to make a great people. This centralising tendency need not be feared, however, and is likely to go on absorbing railways and other great industries. It need not be feared, because another process of devolution

or decentralisation is asserting itself, and relieving the State of many of its petty functions. There are two poles of government—the State and local bodies. On popular representative councils is being devolved the care of those interests which affect in a vital way the inhabitants of different parts ; and these are likely, in course of time, to take under their control the gasworks, the liquor traffic, the purchase of land to sell it in plots to small holders, and such measures as are essential to public health and recreation, and the improvement and embellishment of towns and villages.

In this way the social question is evolving towards solution, but the process does not stop here. The means of production are still further becoming more and more socialised. Industrial operations are less and less carried on by individuals, and organised more and more by syndicates and joint-stock concerns, which collect the producers into large masses, and unite their efforts to a common end—the profit of the shareholders. Never can we go back again to the handloom, to cottage industries, or to the stage-coach ; we must go forward in obedience to the mighty law of social evolution. And what if the next advance shall be from private and competitive firms to

some larger firm of collective and national distribution? The more production is organised on a large scale, the easier it will be to take it over, and conduct it in the common interest for the common good. Let us recognise the law of evolution; let us vindicate the organic character of all true progress, and believe that God is bearing us on to a more real equality, and a more generous brotherhood. The Golden Age, which poets have sung and martyrs died for, is not behind, but before. It is the fulfilment of the apocalyptic vision: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ."

## X.

### *THE GOSPEL AND PESSIMISM.*

EXPERIENCE of life teaches every man that unalloyed happiness cannot be found in this world. Joy and sorrow, good and evil, are woven inextricably into the fortunes of mankind. Things in this world are neither very good nor very bad, and according to the proportion in which any one has met with good or with evil will his view of life and the world be determined. In general, objects have a light and a dark side, and the highest wisdom tells us that we should avoid the habit of viewing things from one side alone, and learn to look on both sides so as to gain a balanced view of things. But all men are not constituted in such a way as to look at both sides of a subject, and judge accordingly. By original temperament, or the force of circumstances, they are disposed to observe the chequered scenery of life from different and strongly contrasted points of view. One man,

endowed with a bright, easy-going habit of mind, perceives only the side of life that basks in sunshine, and everything is rose-coloured to his eye; we call him an Optimist, in modern phrase. He claps you on the back, and with a ring of laughter in his voice tells you that this is the best of all worlds. He has never got beyond the playfulness of childhood, its bright-eyed beauty, its sunny head, and joyous life. Optimism is a bright, but shallow, thoughtless, and, in the full-grown man, frivolous view of things. It takes no account of the tragedy of life, and of all the mental contradictions and moral anomalies which appeal to our profoundest faculties for some solution. It can never be the philosophy of any one who seeks to understand the world in which he lives. The man of different temperament is apt, again, to dwell on the shady side of things, and see them all black. He who stays on the shady side is a Pessimist. To his thinking this is the worst of all worlds, and as for man's life it is not worth living. He sees the depths of dark mystery in which this world rolls through space; he looks at life, and finds it like the sphinx amid its dreary sands on the edge of the desert, hewn into a riddle, a bewildering puzzle, a mocking fate. The decep-

tions of this Vanity Fair called Life no longer hold him ; never has there been anything like fullness of earthly or human joy ; there was a tinge of bitterness in the first and sweetest taste of the world's cup, while old experience finds only bitterness — “ vanity and vexation of spirit ; ” nothing but the barrenness of chance and change is the end of all our paths. Darkness girdles the restlessness of man's little life, and strain his eyes as he may to pierce the darkness, it seems to be all in vain. This view of life has taken hold of many minds in our day, and by them it has been erected into something like the position of a philosophy, and invested with something like the authority of a religion. In an age that assails the supernatural or spiritual order, there will always be a large class of minds to whom pessimism will approve itself as a truer feeling and philosophy than the enthusiasm of humanity. In the wake of materialistic and agnostic theories, what can we expect to hear but the wail of men as of children crying in the night ? And the question is sure to follow, “ Why has man been thus made in vain ? ” In many respects that question is the problem of all the ages ; it presses upon him, as his thought deepens, and presses till it paralyses his best



energies. There are two paths along which human progress has been and will be accomplished. Culture, education, knowledge—but with or without God. If with God, that path will be the path of the just, shining more and more unto the perfect day; but if without God, that path will lead downwards to the deep, where no light falls and no deliverance comes. “Not unpunished,” says Luthardt, “does man eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, unless that divine grace is at hand which heals not only the wounds and sorrows of life, but also the tortures of knowledge. Culture and knowledge without God are the Prometheus of Grecian fable.” We must, however, grant absolute freedom of thought to examine the world, and the problem which it undoubtedly offers to the human intellect for explanation; and whenever such a concession has been made, enough will arise to demonstrate the legitimacy of the pessimistic position. The facts of the world and the experiences of human hearts start problems that have strained the finest intellects since the birth of thought. A strain of pessimism runs through all literature—runs through all lives that have been deeply exercised by thought or by suffering. Whatever else there may be in life, there is in it

a strange capacity of suffering, and it is a capacity which increaseth with the advance of culture and refinement. "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," is the utterance of one of those highly strung natures that, amid disappointment and failure, paint their knowledge of life in sombre hues. This pessimist view finds expression not only in the sadness of Ecclesiastes, but in the overwhelming sorrow of the Book of Job. When the patriarch, standing on the rock of righteousness, from which his three supercilious friends try to oust him,—and God seems to join them in the fierce hurricane of anguish He pours upon him,—when Job lifts his cry to heaven, bewails the day of his birth, and passionately yearns for death, it is hardly possible to conceive the tragedy of life in a situation more bewildering and terrible. The vein of pessimism runs deeply through the Greek drama and Roman literature in the days of the Empire. Even old Homer, the bright-hearted, may be heard sighing that "there is nothing whatever more wretched than man;" the same wail disturbs the light-hearted Odes of Horace; and when we come to the time of Seneca, we find him saying that "death is the last invention of nature." Modern poetry breathes a tone of sadness, almost

of despair, in such voices as those of Heine, Byron, and Shelley. The prevailing tone of Wordsworth and Browning is of a kind that is joyous and hopeful; but Tennyson is the truer poet, in that he sees with such terrible vividness the dark side of the heart and life and time, and yet strives to flash upon it all some higher meaning, some more splendid light. No poet has felt the riddle of this painful world so keenly as he, nor is it surprising if tones of despondency do escape at times from his lips; he could have been a pessimist but for his Christian faith and love. Some of our most imaginative men of genius have been deeply pessimistic in their look at the anxieties of our time. Carlyle had none of the optimism which blinks at moral calamity, which evades all distinct sight of it, and persuades itself with too much ease that it is not evil but good. He was always trying to teach us the opposite—to give us, what we know was so largely due to temperament, a bitter and distempered view of life. The prevalence of melancholy, especially among the well-to-do and cultivated classes, must be noted as a characteristic of our age. The tendency of half the literature of the day is to enfeeble, and even to paralyse, men by fixing their thoughts upon themselves—by

fostering the growth of self-dissection, and a dejected and microscopic exaggeration of miseries. When the emphasis is placed on these things, one has begun to be a pessimist; he lays himself open to be haunted by the incessant whisperings of a voice which asks,—

“Were it not better not to be,  
Than live so full of misery?”

This mood of prevailing melancholy has led in our time to a pessimistic theory of life. It would be difficult to deny that such a theory has an immense amount to support it in the facts of the world and of life. The legitimacy of its position can be found in the darkness, acknowledged by all, which surrounds the problem of evil. Who has ever been able to give a reasoned and satisfactory account of all the moral confusions, agonies, and terrors that have afflicted the best specimens of our race? For pessimism, as a philosophy, formulates the old-world enigma that goodness and happiness are not correlated in human lives. If good, and not evil, be supreme, why should the good suffer, and the evil flourish like a green bay tree? We have a moral ideal in our nature, and yet the world in which we are placed seems to be far from what this ideal demands. Physical nature is full

of forces blind and deaf, that cut across the field of human will, emotion, and purpose—reckless of the havoc they make and the hopes they disappoint. How shall we reconcile the standard of the moral ideal, that forms the apex and crown of our nature, with such a world of pitiless fact? From the religious standpoint, the problem of evil is equally difficult, or more so. For since religion postulates a God in heaven, why did He not make a better world than this one, which so groans and travails together in pain? And if He did not create evil, why did He permit it? Since He predetermined the development of this world, He might have prevented all its pain. How can a Being of perfect goodness and all this moral evil be reconciled? In the face of such contradictions as arise from any point of view we like to take, it is felt that the difficulty of solution must be great. From the time of Job down to the time of Leibnitz, attempts have been made to give a rational harmony of life and the world. Leibnitz undertakes in his *Theodicy*, to prove that this is the best world possible. Optimism, as a philanthropic creed, receives at his hand the most perfect vindication that can be given. He argues that God in His wisdom has chosen the most perfect world,—that

wisdom obeying moral rather than physical requirements,—and the world is one in which the greater perfection and happiness of the whole shall be realised. Good and evil are the mixed colours of brightness and shadow needed to form a true picture—the chords and discords which go to make the full symphony of life. That jubilant idea of life and the world became the prevalent tone of mind in the eighteenth century, and found a worthy expression in the closing lines of Pope's *Essay on Man*,—

“All nature is but art unknown to thee ;  
All chance, discretion which thou canst not see ;  
All discord, harmony not understood ; -  
All partial evil, universal good ;  
And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,  
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.”

But when this scheme of things was subjected to deeper inquiry by such keen critics of speculative method as Hume and Kant, its insufficiency was discovered. Much of the argument for it appeared to be reasoning in a circle. It seemed to minimise or disregard moral evil, for how could that be called sin, or reprobated as bad, which was a means to higher good? Kant rejected alike the absolute dogmas of optimism and pessimism in his estimate of their sufficiency to explain the mysteries of evil



and suffering, though he adopted the common optimism of the age; and what the Kritik of this thinker demolished, his Metaphysik tried to build up again by the aid of the categorical imperative as the highest law of life.

The mantle of Kant has been rent in twain by Hegel and Schopenhauer—Hegel taking hold of optimism, and Schopenhauer of pessimism. While Hegel conceded very much to the darker view, he contrived by some ingenious reasonings about separations and reconciliations, to reach the brighter view of the world and life. “That the history of the world is this process, and the actual becoming of the spirit, amid the changing drama of its several histories—this is the true theodicy, the justification of God in history. The mind can only reconcile itself to the history of the world, and to actuality, by recognising that what has happened and is happening every day, not only does not happen without God, but is essentially the work of God itself.”

This view of the world as a process of evolution towards some rational and worthy end, holds a place of importance in modern thought; it is one which accords with Comte's social ideal and Darwin's doctrine of evolution.



On the other hand, Schopenhauer, starting likewise from Kant's criticism, and seeking to correct it by its own light, shows all existence to be a burden, evil and remediless, and in working out his system has done it with such originality and ingenuity, that he is regarded as the founder of modern pessimism. He was born at Dantzic in 1788. Both his parents were remarkable persons. His father, a rich merchant, was a man of some culture, but with a restless temperament and choleric disposition. His mother was a fair little woman, vivacious, clear-headed, and of refined tastes. He was wont to say that children inherit moral character from their father and intellectual qualities from their mother, and so we understand that he was naturally passionate and irritable in temper, but endowed with strong powers of mind. His education tended to strengthen his peculiarities; he travelled in France and England, mixing freely in the best intellectual society, and acquainting himself with the world rather than with books. This trained him in the school of realities, and gave him a certain advantage in the development of his thought, which led some one to remark that his philosophy is not like any other, because it is one which has seen the world. All

the opinions that a clear and self-reliant thinker could invent were early formed. At eighteen he was convinced of the misery of men ; at twenty-one, of their depravity ; and at twenty-five, of his vast mental superiority to the most of men. The relation between him and his mother was peculiar and painful. His melancholy disturbed, while his dogmatism puzzled her. He does not show to advantage during his sojourn under her roof at Weimar, in wrangling with her as to which of their works will fare hardest with posterity. His principal work, *The World of Will and Representation*, was published when he was twenty-eight, and though it was not widely received at first, or studied as it now is in Germany and England, yet it gave him rank among the leading thinkers of his age. It is not our purpose to give an account of his philosophy, or examine its merits and defects, at any length ; we shall do enough if we show its bearings in a few sentences. According to him, will is the only real existence, the underlying unity of the world : it is an immanent, not a transient, force. Its first form in the world of appearance—the “ objectivation of will,” he calls it—is knowledge, perception, or consciousness. This bold generalisation is the

chief cornerstone of his system, and marks it off as distinctly original. While most philosophers start from the intellect or the emotions, he starts from the will as the primal force in nature, conscious and powerful in man, less so in the lower animals, fainter still in the vegetable kingdom, but not absent even from inorganic matter, as in the phenomena of attraction and electricity. The world as will precedes the world as idea. Next, the affirmation of will is existence, or the will to live; and the will to live, or instinct of self-preservation, evolves intelligence as its servant, to show what objects it blindly strives after, and how they may be reached. The will is, in its very nature, desire, or need of something, and striving to get it; and striving involves pain. Since will, desire, striving, pain, remain positive and persistent elements of our nature, no satisfaction is enduring; they create a perpetual striving and insatiable thirst. Therefore, the negation of the will to live is the only possible happiness. This is the metaphysical basis of Schopenhauer's view of things; it is the religion of Buddhism, with its aspiration after Nirvana; it is the mystic ideal of Moslem and Christian, which, seeing no end to the evils of existence, desires the annihilation of all individual

wills, and hopes thus to terminate the passionate and bitter strife.

Schopenhauer's pessimistic reading of life rests not only on abstract and speculative reasoning, but also on the concrete and empirical fact that this world is full of misery. The misery of life increases in the direct ratio of intelligence, and this appears at a minimum in the lower animals, but at its maximum in man. In him the same ratio holds, sensibility to pain increasing with the increase of culture and education. If life is not positive pain, it becomes ennui; according to Schopenhauer, these two states are ultimate elements of life. "As want is the constant scourge of the people, so is ennui that of the fashionable world." He concludes that the existence of the world is sin, its essence misery, each individual a partaker in the transgression, and therefore in the misery; and that the only remedy for all this wrong is for the chief perpetrator to deny what is affirmed, and cease to perpetuate the folly of the will to live. He denounced this as a crime in his chief work, but later in life he treated it as a matter for pity rather than for blame, and described man as something that ought not to be, as a solecism, a blunder, and a fool. "For," to

use his own words, "this is, as a rule, the course of a man's life, that, befooled by hope, he dances into the arms of death."

Schopenhauer's scheme of the world has been still further developed and corrected by his pupil, Hartmann, in his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. Leopardi, a poet and philosopher born in the same year as Schopenhauer, has sung the miseries of existence in tones of pathetic despair. Innately morbid, poor, and seldom free from pain, without a creed besides, he was cut out to be a pessimist, and the following lines utter his sense of the misfortune and misery of life,—

"O weary heart, for ever shalt thou rest  
Henceforth. Perished is the great delusion  
That I thought would ne'er have left me—perished!  
Nought now is left of all these dear deceits;  
Desire is dead, and not a hope remains.  
Rest then for ever. Thou hast throbb'd enough;  
Nothing here is worth such palpitations.  
Our life is valueless, for it consists  
Of nought but ennui, bitterness, and pain.  
The world of clay deserveth not a sigh.  
Now calm thyself; conceive thy last despair,  
And wait for death, the only gift of Fate."

It is strange that a creed like pessimism should have taken hold of a people so sturdy in knowledge and action as the German nation. We cannot think it strange that three hundred millions of

Asiatics should have drunk for ages opium-draughts of such fatal doctrines, though that too is extraordinary enough ; but, "that a nation," as M. Caro says, "formed of such robust and vivacious elements, should have given a triumphant welcome to those theories of despair taught by Schopenhauer—all this seems at first inexplicable." Still more remarkable fact : it appears that the creed of the melancholy philosopher has begun to commend itself to some in our country who have no religion of their own, having lost faith in Christianity, yet are tired of scepticism. It is a habit with us to adopt the worn-out fashions of German speculation, and now that Hegelianism has had its day there, and the sombre creed of Schopenhauer comes into favour, we may hear less of Hegel in our seats of learning for some time to come, and more of Schopenhauer and his views. Doubtless, a future generation will consign his scheme of things to the lumber-room, for it seems to be the fate of all metaphysical systems to be unverifiable, and so far unprofitable, though, like other fashions, they are a necessity of the times when they are in vogue.

The German pessimist did not, it seems, find life so utterly miserable as he described it. By



reducing and simplifying his wants, he obtained freedom from anxiety, and found existence tolerable, and experienced some degree of pleasure in disinterested study of the world's sorrows. They are treated in his writings with a picturesque eloquence which Hegel could not command in preaching his optimistic gospel of life, and with a sombre, cynical humour that hid gleams of satisfaction somewhere; the artistic beauty of his tirades is an assurance to us that they were not painful to write, that he did not too strenuously "affirm" the will which made him a pessimist.

Whatever may be said about the woes of existence, human nature is fortunately so constituted as to take an optimistic conception of the world. The poet gives it voice in the words that "hope springs eternal in the human breast." Children are full of an innocent gladness, and young men are ardent and full of enthusiasm. While the young are in the world, they fill it with sunshine. As a rule, old people are usually regarded as pessimists, who praise the former days, and say that the world goes from bad to worse; but who has not known old people who have grown cheerfuller and lighter-hearted as they have grown



older ? The majority of men are biassed to think well of life, and not ill of it. All the joyousness of youth and all the energy of men are quietly ignored by those who would impose upon us a pessimistic view of life. And the world we live in opens to us all a thousand springs of pleasure and delight. Schopenhauer found peculiar delight in contemplating the beauty of nature and works of art, so that the world did not offer to him the deadly emptiness of a fool's paradise. If he had been less misanthropic and morbid, and more thankful, devout, and open to the sweet influences that temper the harshness of life, he might have followed another method, and written a Theodicy more profound and harmonising than Leibnitz attempted. There is a shallow, easy-going optimism, of course, which thinks only of the pleasures and not of the pains of life. The true reason why optimism is in the poor repute so often attached to it is its levity, its superficiality, its readiness to suppose that to be the best part of work or kind of happiness which is not the best. For instance, when it prefers good results which can be measured and numbered, which make a show, to the implanting of a new principle ; when it prefers the test of statistical success to the

higher test of moral awakenment and beneficent activity. Pessimists are more quick in exposing such optimistic superficialities than in making out their case of things as tending from bad to worse. In addition to what has been said about the tendency of human nature to look at the bright side of life, it is the witness of sober and thoughtful experience, that the sum of happiness does, in general, exceed the sum of misery. It is a truth which every chastened will is ready to acknowledge, that he who has had less in life than he desired, has yet had more than he deserved. The question is a moot one, whether pleasure predominates over pain, happiness over misery; we know that men of despondent view reply in the negative, but we know also that the greatest number of men will give their votes for the bright and hopeful scheme of things.

Pessimism ought to be treated as a morbid, disproportionate, and hurtful estimate of the ills of life. There is a want of sanity in multiplying and magnifying the evils of the world; there is something morbid and unmanly in exaggerating the woes of existence. Schopenhauer made the most of them, with the result that this habit unmanned him; he had none of the courage which laughs at

destiny and makes man so largely the master of circumstances ; he had none of the fortitude which is the best safeguard in a world that decidedly admits of improvement. Such a gloomy estimate of life envelops it in darkness, smites all its powers with impotence and self-decay. When Schopenhauer teaches that consciousness—which puts man at the head of nature—is the mistake and malady of nature, we may pronounce the dream of pessimism to be a paralysing and mischievous nightmare. The world we live in is the only world we know, and it ill becomes us to paint it in such dark colours ; it is full of marvellous arrangements for securing our happiness, and it invites us to diligent co-operation in securing the same end. Instead of abusing it, we should rather hold that the soul of the world is just ; let us thank God it is no worse than it is, and whatever ills it has for us, let us meet them with calm, brave hearts.

The problem of evil and suffering is a great deep, deeper than thought can go, and without a God, without any belief in an eternal development of the personal life, the problem is utterly inexplicable. Apart from supernatural religion, there are no resources of vitality, no springs of energy to relieve the sadness or help us in the strife ; apart from the

gospel of Jesus Christ, the most ennobling and exhilarating motives of life dwindle to poor and wasted shreds, insufficient to support men in prolonged suffering, or through the prospect of dreary and monotonous care. The evils of life are not ignored in Scripture or in the Christian gospel. Schopenhauer regards the story of the fall of man in Genesis as the one deep spiritual truth of the Old Testament, and recognises the fundamental view of the world which he presents as being taught by Christianity ; yet he did not look so deeply into the dark awfulness of the problem as Jesus Christ has done. It does not appear that the idea of sin, with its concomitant emotions, has properly any place in his system ; its existence is held to be the repining of will over the discovery of its self-deception — an expression of the baffled will for a harmonious universe which does not exist. Life is not viewed as a good gift from above, which we may abuse ; but as a debt, contracted by ourselves at birth, and which we vainly try to discharge. The idea of sin, whether in its reality of guilt or pollution or power, does not particularly trouble the pessimist ; he is not haunted by the pangs of selfishness and degradation and shame, but by the torments of defeat, disappointment, and despair.

Christ does not blink the fact of sin, but arouses the sense of it. He paints the vision of pessimism in still darker hues than any colourist of that gloomy school has ventured to use. And yet what teacher ever set forth the intrinsic worth of human life as Jesus Christ sets it forth? The value which he puts on every man, however evil and lost, is a value simply immeasurable. "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Take the most pessimistic view of man which imaginative insight affords, and add to it the too much overlooked features of guilt and defilement and degradation, yet Christ sees in him boundless possibilities of good, and with His gospel of redemption casts around him the bow of infinite hope. The sure remedy for life's sorest ills is the message of "God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself—God commending His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The life of the Son of God, the love of His atonement, and the power of His resurrection, are the primary rays of the one light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. In that Light pessimism betakes itself to the moles and bats; in that Light the once captive soul can say, "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of

the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." The gift of Christ's gospel is a gift of life—of "more life and fuller," and it is one of the most distinctive, one of the most impressive, one of the most inspiring and animating elements of the Christian evangel. Men miss a great part if they do not believe in Christ, receive this gift of life, and consciously possess it. Christ came to make the life of the Eternal ours, and lack of this gift, in the fulness of its glory, explains the absence of buoyancy, courage, and animation, not only in the experience of pessimists who do not know Christ, but in the life of many Christian people who profess to know Him. The gospel of Christ, as new life to dead humanity, is the gift of a spirit of power, love, and sound mind; it directly increases the spring and elation of the heart; it gives a joyousness which is not the joyousness of mere light hearts, but is the joyousness of creative power—a power which transmutes sorrow into the means of blessing, which uplifts amid the stress and strain of adversity, which gives strength to bear the burdens of life, and which increases with the victory by which it overcomes the world. The



spirit of the race ought to rise, and not to fall, as the centuries go on ; and all the voices of science, art, and improvement on every side say Amen. But "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is, above all else, the inspiring and elevating power. With our knowledge of law, we feel as if we could shortly store up light and heat against the cooling of the sun ; but pessimism points to no such surplusage of power, when it wraps the pall of gloom around us, and would fain shut the Sun of Righteousness out of the heavens. The growth of scepticism in general, and of pessimism in particular, can only tend more effectually to throw a damper on the human spirit, to quench for a time its vividness and overshadow its joy. It may utter a mood of weariness which runs like a wail through our modern consciousness, and thus spend itself ; but a creed so devoid of buoyant and cheerful outlook has no power to save. It is a temporary phase of error, and cannot stay with us, and need not, because the fountain of life and hope in a risen Christ is on high, inexhaustible, and ready to be poured out on us in answer to every revived sense of need. As mind and heart, love and self-sacrifice, infinite purpose and divine humility, are known to brood over us, the more will the spring of joyous-

ness mount up to it, and the greater will be the elasticity of our mental and moral forces to be the evidence of a perennial spring on high from which they are derived.

Pessimism errs in teaching that life's sorrows are an unmitigated curse, and in perpetually whining over them. We should not conclude hastily that the best world must be without evil. A world that answered to pleasant optimistic dreams might have been anything but favourable to the highest moral developments. Wordsworth thinks that such a world could not secure even happiness.

"If life were slumber on a bed of down,  
Toil unimposed, vicissitude unknown,  
Sad were our lot."

The highest good comes out of evil. In the Christian doctrine of the sanctifying effect of affliction, we find one of the deepest and most consolatory truths of life. There is a permanent element of sadness in life, and its inevitableness is often truly pathetic. It is easy to look at the dark side of things, and grow sad; for life abounds in strange sad mysteries, often close at our side. It is easy to assume the pessimistic attitude; but a wise and brave mind will rather seek to know if there is not a soul of good in things evil, and learn that purity

is more to be desired than happiness, and moral riches better than good fortune. The noblest spirits see no attraction in ease and pleasure; but, dashing these aside, welcome toil and struggle and adversity, as far more to them than the charms of happiness which spring from the luxurious environments of life. We are put to school here, and often to rough tasks, but the best lessons are thus learned. Let us be anxious, most of all, to discover the "moral uses of dark things," and to see that a sovereign will, loving and righteous, works, though often darkly, for our highest good.

The best cure for pessimism is work—work of hand or heart. Pessimism does not exist among the hardy sons of toil, but rather among those who toil not, neither do they spin. There are prosperous, comfortably situated people who die of a disease which nerve-doctors know as the *tædium vitæ*, but which may be as well described as the absence of content in living. It is not the noble discontent of souls ever striving to realise some moral ideal, but the sadness bred of a deficient interest in the concerns of life. It arises from a too great easiness in the comforts of life, and want of something to do. Instead of desiring for an impossible fulfilment of wishes, it would be wise to thrust aside a life too

full of materials for refined pleasure, and undertake some kind of work. A dose of Thomas à Kempis every morning, and two hours a day in the slums, would cure the most inveterate pessimist in a month. It is untrue to say that all effort is pain, and will to live suffering, for worthy effort constitutes one of the purest and simplest pleasures. Work of any sort measures the true worth of being, and the more of it we do the richer is the satisfaction which it will afford.

To seek others' good is above all one of the best means of lighting dark days and realising one's own happiness. Keble says, "When you find yourselves overpowered as it were by melancholy, the best way is to go out and do something kind to somebody." That counsel is wholly good. Sympathy with others' woes will take the mind off our own, and tend to contribute a distinct element of pleasure in the gratification of tender emotion. The power of sympathy which Christ gives is a great source of imaginative life, and a great help to the insight which elevates anguish into tragedy and suffering into sacrifice; while it furnishes an anodyne for others' woes, and comes back to us in rich returns of benediction.

It is true that the shadow of the Fall rests on

our highest and best work, and amid disparagement of our holiest efforts, and the pain of actual defeat and failure, we are forced to ask, "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" Earth's best sons have found their bravest endeavours to be fruitless toil; the kingliest among them have had to wear the crown of thorns. Many a man works for God and man with heart and soul for years, and sees no fruit of his labour. Our highest exertions prove our most palpable failures. All earnest men think they die in failure; their highest purposes remain unfulfilled. Life would be an unaccountable enigma if it had not the promise of another life, and there is a heaven for those who have failed on earth. Every true life shall have its consummation as well as its recompense. Life's discipline here is a development of our powers for heavenly service, and nobler ministries in higher worlds will yield rewards before whose "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" all the dreary toils of earth will for ever be forgotten.

The pessimist's view of the world may be so far true that it is not a complete and perfect theatre of life. It was not so in early geological ages. Non-completion of the Creator's work can be seen

at every stage, and can be seen still. Does not an apostle say, with deep insight, that the world groans and travails in pain? And this pain and suffering are the conditions through which life is striving to work itself clear. The Creator is not so much rectifying a world that was originally made perfect, and has since gone out of gear, but He is gradually creating a better world than has yet been seen. Under the first view, the existence of evil would seem to deny omnipotence, goodness, and love in the Author of all things; but if we once grasp the idea that the world is not made, but that the Creator is making it through us, making us dissatisfied with the world around us that we may co-operate with Him to the making of a better world, most of the difficulties of pessimism vanish. Daylight flashes through them, and the shadows flee away.



## XI.

### *THE GOSPEL AND ART.*

THERE is a mysterious power in the world which has never ceased to captivate the human spirit, which appeals to what is highest and noblest in us, or yet again to what is lowest and worst. The world is full of things which charm the eye and ear, which attract the mind, and which excite the soul with emotions of wonder, delight, and rapture. The world teems with objects of beauty, and these objects are endlessly varied in form and light and colour, in feature and expression, in tone and ordered sound, in word and suggestion. And to man has been given the mysterious faculty of recognising, appreciating, and reproducing all this opulence of the beautiful in nature and life. The sense of beauty is at once the most mysterious and the most fascinating endowment of our nature, and it yields to us some of the most exquisite elements of brightness and joy. Whence comes

this strange faculty of perception, this instinct for the beautiful in creation, this power of producing it in every conceivable form of sculpture, architecture, painting, music, and poetry? Account for it as we may, there can be no doubt that it is the crown and glory of gifts which sets man at the head of all that lives, and affords him treasures of boundless delight.

It is not therefore to be wondered at if a sense so full of subtle and varied charm should pre-occupy the mind to the exclusion of all other interests, and if devotion to it should almost become a religion. It is not surprising that the gospel of art seems, among many of its students, to have taken the place that can be held alone by the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is not surprising that in this new worship and enthusiasm of the time, "the wondrous shadows of God's glory should take the place of God Himself in His holiness, His righteousness, His moral law." Woe be unto us, however, if we yield to this temptation, or imagine that any gospel of beauty and art can be a substitute for the gospel of an incarnate and atoning Saviour. For history tells us that such undue exaltation of art brings its own punishment in the degeneracy both of art and character.

In trying, then, to ascertain the relation of Christianity to art, it is necessary to form some adequate idea of the nature and function of art, and find out what religion has to do with it, or what it has to do with religion. Does the teaching of Christ evoke or enlist this interest, as it does so many more, of human life? How far does the gospel encourage the cultivation of art, and how far does art contribute to the service of the gospel? Since art cannot be ignored in the progress of humanity, we may be sure that Christianity has something to do with it, something to vitalise, purify, and exalt it. The power of religion is fitted to aid the highest conception of the dignity of art, and of the moral responsibility of the artist.

Proceeding to examine the sphere and service of art, we confine what shall be said to the fine arts, as distinguished from those that are merely useful, from the various manufactures which minister to the necessities and conveniences of human life. Art stands related to manufacture in the same way as beauty does to utility in nature. Everywhere do we see the useful efflorescing into the beautiful, and the sphere of art comprehends all nature and life under this aspect of beauty. It seeks to

interpret and exhibit natural facts with truth and fidelity ; it strives to fix a smile or a look of pathos in bronze or on the canvas ; it loves to render by external form the magic of fugitive and evanescent emotions. Leonardo was wont to follow up and down the streets of Florence or of Milan unknown beautiful faces, learning them by heart, interpreting their changes of expression, reading their thoughts through the features. He has left a series of such portraits in outline, each with a subtle charm—a procession of shadows cast by reality, that, entering the camera of the artist's brain, gained some new and spiritual quality. The artist seeks to catch and body forth, in sensible form, that fine essence which gleams upon us from the stars, and glows in sunsets, which blushes in flowers and flashes on the sea, which peers forth in visible features and invisible character, which streams everywhere in colour and form, evermore to fascinate and thrill us. Art is the power to express whatever delights the eye and ear, and transfer the inmost truth of things to poem and picture and music. It should pierce directly to the simple and true. The best of beauty is subtler than the skill of surfaces and outlines, or the surprise of brilliant hues or symmetrical forms. Personal loveliness, inexpressive

of inner meaning, has no attraction for the highest art. To draw a fair naked body for the sake of its carnal charm is to degrade art, and make it the minister of vice. Its true function is the familiar expression, through stone, canvas, or sound, of the deepest and simplest attributes of nature and life. Its highest charm is the universal language which it speaks, as in the sculptures of the Greek and in the pictures of the Italian schools. In the Athenian school of art we have the truth of human form as it had never been expressed before or since. Greek sculptors made the discovery that the body of man is a miracle of beauty, each limb a divine wonder, each muscle a joy as great as the sight of stars or flowers. In the Florentine and Venetian schools of art, the truth of human expression and the effect of light and colour on all things have been set forth with a mastery that can never be surpassed. It is a dictum of the highest art that natural truth comes first, and beauty afterwards. The aim of the artist is not mere æsthetic taste, but faithful interpretation of nature. True art sees, feels, and reproduces nature and character. Beauty, pathos, and success all lie in being simply natural.

Art has, however, an element distinctly human,

what may be called the ideal, and the ideal is the highest truth. Every great work of art is an honest effort to give it expression. It does not consist in mere literalism—in a slavish imitation, but in a free interpretation of natural facts. It is impossible to arrange real drapery, as great artists arrange it on their canvas. Skill depends on intentional or unconscious deviation from literal accuracy. Raphael deviated intentionally, for he said that he did not paint what is, but that which ought to be. This is search after the ideal, a high capacity for which comes forth in the production of a fine taste and delicate sense of beauty, or in the creations of artistic genius; delight in the ideal produces a noble discontent with what is common, accompanied by a fine relish for whatever approximates to itself. In Leonardo's Last Supper at Milan, the head of Christ was never finished, because the artist could not realise his too lofty ideal. A sublime genius is always discontented with its own works. And here we find once more the image of God in man set forth in lines of indubitable parallelism. The idealist or transcendentalist in art shows affinity with, and, after a measure, the potency of the Supreme Artist Himself. The fountain of beauty is in God, and the



effort of art is to reach it, and the noble discontent it feels is due to a sense of shortcoming. The artist, in virtue of the ideal, is, like God, a maker or a creator. The poet, the musician, the sculptor, the painter, each moulds the proper material at his disposal, and lords over it like a God. Why have the lower animals no poets or painters or architects? Simply because they have not been made in the image of God, or endowed with that divine faculty of creative sovereignty which, next to his religious nature, constitutes man's pre-eminence.

Art ought, then, to be true to nature and life, and it has a higher function than merely to imitate. The artist abdicates his office who simply repeats for the mass of men what they see for themselves. He must bid them see the ideal as he realises it. He drops details, the prose of nature, and gives the spirit and splendour; he looks beyond features to character, and treats the outward man before him as an imperfect likeness of the aspiring original within; he strives to make clear to others what finer insight has made visible to himself. There is an element of ideality and infinity in his works. Orpheus, Homer, Titian, Turner, and Handel have caught for us the splendour of meaning that plays

over the world, the rhythmic sounds that hint some perfect harmony of the universe. The works of art suggest something beyond that which they directly present,—something to be looked for, and felt after, thoughts which they quicken but do not satisfy. Thus—

“Art may tell a truth  
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,  
Nor wrong the thought.”

How closely art is in this way allied to religion, and well nigh a part of it, looking away to the ideal and infinite, we do not stop to indicate, but shall go on to sketch as briefly as possible the history of art, and learn therefrom its further connection with religion.

Art may be traced as far back as Egypt and Assyria, and must have existed there full of might and majesty, as testified by monuments whose silent language is still intelligible to us. Moses carried this art-power, derived from both these countries, into the wilderness, and it was shown in the building of the Tabernacle, and many kinds of workmanship connected with its services. Bezaleel, the chief artificer of the Tabernacle, was filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all

manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass. He had a large number of skilled workmen under him, and they seem to have been specially expert in the art of cutting, polishing, and engraving of gems. It is evident, then, that art, under the name of cunning work, existed among the Hebrews at the time of the Exodus, and while conforming in several respects to "the manner of Egypt," it was far from being a mere copy or continuation of Egyptian art. It was regarded as a gift of divine inspiration, and the gift thus conferred on Bezaleel must have chosen its own forms of workmanship. Of course, the genius of art in its grander, finer forms, was not possible to wanderers in the desert. They could have no architecture, properly so called, and therefore no painting and no sculpture. In Solomon's Temple, however, architectural effects were achieved, for it was to be "exceeding magnificent;" and on the walls of the house there were carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers. These figures represent art ministering at the shrine of religion—forms of natural beauty and fruitfulness, conjoined with forms of spiritual sublimity in the service of God.

Architecture is the oldest of the arts, as Egypt

and Assyria testify, and from it the rest take their commencement. Sculpture follows, and this work of investing thought with sensible shape became the characteristic fine art of Greece. It is the mission of art to impress the thoughts of the mind upon stone, and architecture is usually the first form in which such an attempt is made; but the struggle with matter is not yet brought forth unto victory. In sculpture, however, the material is more subdued to supersensual power, and made to be the vehicle of the spirit. We owe the best sculpture ever produced to Greece, and to Phidias, its great master. Never was thought so nobly impressed upon stone, or the goodness of the human form so perfectly represented, as it was by the Athenian school. Those moral and spiritual qualities which the Greeks recognised as truly human, and therefore divine, were incarnated in well-selected types of physical perfection. The Greeks thought their gods to be incarnate persons, men and women of finer mould, and the artist selected corporeal qualities to impersonate the special character of each divinity, and strove to make it as impressive in his marble as possible. "In a Greek statue there was enough soul to characterise the beauty of the body, to render her

due meed of wisdom to Pallas, to distinguish the swiftness of Hermes from the strength of Hercules, or to contrast the virginal grace of Artemis with the abundance of Aphrodite's charms." <sup>1</sup> The Parthenon, with its gods and heroes, robed in raiment that revealed their living form, shows sculpture in all the grace, repose, and strength that belongs to her domain of placid concrete form. There they are, clear as morning, and calm in the unconsciousness of beauty, matchless representations of ancient art, yet with all the faults due to the inefficiency of material which sculpture works upon. It cannot give the glow of light and colour to its figures, or express some of the most significant features. But for rounded contour of beautiful forms, for tranquillity and self-restraint, the Greek school of art remains unsurpassed.

Coming to the middle ages, we find architecture carried to a pitch of grandeur and beauty it had never reached, and is not likely to reach again. Architecture was pre-eminently a mediæval art, and sprang out of a genuine religious enthusiasm, in which the spirit of worship took into affiance the spirit of art. It suited, because it grew out of the mysticism of the middle ages, their vague but

<sup>1</sup> *Renaissance in Italy*; J. A. Symonds.

potent feelings of infinity, their ecstatic contemplations, their yearning towards a deity invisible but localised in holy things and places. The Gothic style of work, with its lofty shaft and springing arch and high-pitched roof, is full of mystic faith and aspiration, and seems to say, "Look up. Not here." We speak of the dark ages, and they had gross superstitions; but out of them came that marvel of devotional literature, *The Imitation of Christ*, and those marvels of deep-wrought stone, such as the cathedrals of Milan and Rouen, and the abbeys of Tintern and Melrose, so full of exquisite harmony of parts, as to give rise to the saying that architecture is petrified music. The voices of the old builders are hushed for ever, but, as Ruskin says in the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, we have "those fair fronts of variegated mosaic, charged with wild fancies and dark hosts of imagery, thicker and quainter than ever filled the depth of midsummer dream; those vaulted gates, trellised with close leaves; those window-labyrinths of twisted tracery and starry light; those misty masses of multitudinous pinnacle and diademed tower; the only witnesses, perhaps, that remain to us of the fear and faith of nations. . . . They have taken with



them to the grave their powers, their honours, and their errors, but they have left us their adoration."

At the close of the middle ages, between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, another great age of art arose in Italy, when architecture and sculpture had their renaissance, and painting became, what sculpture had been to Greece, the distinguishing fine art of the period. At that time the entire nation seemed to be endowed with an instinct for the beautiful, and a power to represent it in every conceivable form; but painting reached a point of perfection that placed Italy among all the nations of the world unapproachably alone. A new cycle of religious ideas and feelings had been introduced by Christianity, and to express them the genius of art had to devise a more pliant and scopeful medium. "Faith, hope, and charity; humility, endurance, suffering; the resurrection and the judgment; the fall and the redemption; heaven and hell; the height and depth of man's mixed nature; the drama of human destiny before the throne of God;" for this sphere of thoughts the Greek sculptor's marble and chisel were utterly inadequate — it demanded some higher artistic power. An art was needed to be at home in the

sphere of intense feeling, to haunt Calvary instead of Helicon, and Olivet instead of Olympus, and to represent such scenes as the Last Judgment. Painting, in the hands of such masters as Leonardo, Raphael, and Michael Angelo, has furnished a more elastic medium of expression for those new Christian elements, and in the works of those masters has given supreme displays of artistic skill that can never cease to be the admiration of the world. To painting belongs the power of colour and shadow, perspective and grouping, in a measure denied to sculpture. The former art likewise represents the play of features, indicative of varied motives and delicate sentiments, and transient emotions that flash out from inner depths of the soul. In the masterpieces of this art, all the charming grace of form and witchery of colour have been employed to delineate the lofty thoughts, the tender sentiments, the mighty terrors, the splendid hopes of the Christian faith.

When painting had thus fulfilled its high task, another art arose to do much that painting could not achieve. Music expresses the soul in its manifold feeling and perplexity of movement. It possesses a mysterious command over the realm of emotions, creating atmospheres of joy and peace

which no other art can produce, and restoring harmony to the sweet bells of the spirit "jangled, out of tune." The simple notes of David's harp dispelled the evil spirit in King Saul, and a fine melody, disconnected from words, will make the listener feel that there are things unutterable; it gives a distinct form to moods of feeling as yet undetermined. Music is the language of emotions that border on the infinite and eternal, and more than any other art expresses the spirit in its freedom, and therefore it is the essentially modern art. It is an undoubted fact that music, in its highest developments, is as peculiarly the art of the last three centuries as architecture was the art of the middle ages, or as painting was the art of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. It is within the last three centuries that the great musicians were born, Handel in 1685, Mozart in 1756, Beethoven in 1772, Mendelssohn in 1808; and to these and other composers of the same period we are indebted for the most perfect creations of music that have been given to the world. Since music is so peculiarly a modern art, its function may be to effect for the societies of to-day, so highly organised and intensely self-conscious, what sculpture and painting, and poetry,

which has been of all times, effected for the simpler communities of the past. It is the least intellectual of all the arts, not able to compete with poetry, dispensing with words and even thoughts; yet so divine a gift as to express emotions of infinite joy and sorrow, and carry away the soul from the dim and feeble yearnings of time to the vast and glorious harmonies of eternity.

After this survey, it will appear that a historical connection has always existed between religion and art. In Greek sculpture the two were merged, and in Italian painting Christianity afforded to art its noblest subjects, while art did much to humanise the mysteries, and set forth the solemnities, of the Christian faith. The question still remains, whether art and religion are related to one another by an inward necessity. However close may be the tie which, as a matter of history, has united them, can the connection between them be said to be necessary? Some hold religion to be opposed to art, because it refers us to a life beyond the present, and disturbs that finished self-contained harmony of this world which art has for its sphere and end. It is also argued that Christianity aims so much at strengthening the moral and spiritual nature of man, that it has no sympathy with attempts to

express its great truths in forms of time and sense. A writer on the Renaissance in Italy entertains the difficult problem of the relation of the fine arts to Christianity, when he says, "The spirit of Christianity and the spirit of figurative art are opposed, not because such art is immoral, but because it cannot free itself from sensuous associations. It is always bringing us back to the dear life of earth, from which the faith would sever us. It is always reminding us of the body which piety bids us forget. Painters and sculptors glorify that which saints and ascetics have mortified. The masterpieces of Titian and Correggio, for example, lead the soul away from compunction, away from penitence, away from worship even, to dwell on the delight of youthful faces, blooming colour, graceful movement, delicate emotion. . . . Art, by magnifying human beauty, contradicts these Pauline maxims: 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;' 'Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth;' 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.'" In addition to such a view, it may be said that devotion to art in Italy took the place of truth, morality, righteousness, Christian life, and worship of beauty for its own sake brought its own Nemesis in the degeneracy alike of art and character.

Now, such argument has large truth in it, and should be kept before us, with its lesson ; but it does not sustain the inference of an essential antagonism between Christianity and fine art. On the other hand, it is sufficient to show that a necessary connection between them, so often taken for granted, cannot be made out. As to the argument thus adduced for the opposition of the gospel to æsthetic taste, let us observe that it is founded on the ascetic or monastic spirit of Christianity, and not on the Christianity of Christ. The ascetic form of piety, as seen in our Puritan and Covenanting ancestors, has no sympathy with natural or artistic beauty ; but Christ Himself cherished and manifested a different spirit, when He consecrated natural and human enjoyments at Cana of Galilee, when He pointed to the lilies of the field with their glorious beauty, and when He taught by parables, those word-pictures by which He embodied truths of spiritual significance in forms of the beautiful. The healthiest Christian temper rejoices in the sight of all visible beauty, fully, heartily, and welcomes it as the suggestion of a higher beauty ; while the temper of religious severity turns away from all earthly loveliness, and mortifies it as the lust of the eyes. We need not contend that art



derives its origin from religion, or that no great art can exist without religious impulse. The two occupy different spheres, though as a matter of history they have always been near neighbours, and have often been in mutual alliance. Art has found its native home in religion, and it would be disastrous to both alike if the bond which unites them were to be broken. Art is one of the spiritual powers of our nature, and the most delicate of them all, approximating to the religious spirit, and apt to become a religion when it is idolatrously pursued. Nothing, however, in the artistic spirit is at all incompatible with the purest spirit of devotion ; indeed, it draws us continually towards a state of mind akin to the devotional, by requiring us to spend our time in absorbed study of the work of the Supreme Artist. Art requires religion, and religion may be served by art. Religious awe and moral nobility are needed to make a genuine artist. With Michael Angelo the service of beauty was a religion ; not, indeed, as a substitute for religion, but because religion was alike his sublime subject and mighty inspiration in the fulfilment of that service. How spiritual and creative art is, we see in its triumph of mind over matter. It sets the stamp of beauty on the sensible. Ancient sculpture re-

presents the gods in human forms that charm us with their symmetry. It subdues the cold marble in a wonderful way to express human thought, but the limits of matter still keep it from surmounting the finite and natural. Painting, by the aid of light and colour, achieves a still greater degree of creative and spiritual mastery. It expresses a wider and higher range of mind and heart. Music uses a still subtler and more spiritual medium, and therefore penetrates more deeply the life of the soul. "The high, the truly moral destiny of music is to render sensible the harmonious emotions and images of a mind stirred by the revelation of God and His kingdom, by a poetry of sound as deeply felt as it is artistic."<sup>1</sup>

Religion and art have their home in the world of the ideal, and both of them strive to keep before us a harmony of existence beyond the discords of this world. Art is man's effort to get nearer the mind of God in His works—to feel and express those ideas of order, balance, and harmony that have been wrought into the material universe. Religion is man's effort to get nearer the heart of God—to feel and express those same ideas in the moral sphere. Beauty is the pursuit of both—

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt's *Moral Truths of Christianity*.

beauty being the earthly shadow of holiness, and holiness the spiritual form of beauty. They both aim at expressing an ideal; and this ideal is the transfiguration of human elements into something nobler, apprehended by the imagination, felt by the heart, and cast into shape by the will. All beauty has in it a suggestion of the transcendent and infinite; it is ever pointing away beyond itself, as if holding a hint and gleam of eternity in its eye. It is the office of all high art, as of true religion, to allure us away into the mysterious and infinite.

All beauty has in it the hint and token of a completed ideal; it is the lustre of perfection—the sunshine on a landscape that brightens and spiritualises it. Whatever strikes us as pre-eminently beautiful is deemed by us most nearly to approach perfection of its kind. Our intellectual apprehension of beauty, whether it be in a poem or painting, or in the beauty of human character and action, is a perception of ideal completeness realised to a greater or less extent. Our admiration and delight rise in proportion as anything reaches perfect expression; and yet, however great our admiration of, and delight in, anything may be, we can mostly conceive of an ideal beauty greater still. The finest thing in all the world is when natural and spiritual

beauty meet, and meet in high degrees of fulfilment; yet that is but the dim hint, and fragmentary intimation, of something still more perfect. That the eye "is not satisfied with seeing" is the language both of religion and art; and both of them, although in greatly different measures of distinctness, teach us to look for perfection beyond the visible.

Christianity and art ought, then, to be viewed as harmonious influences in human life. Each aids the other. Art owes to Christianity the material out of which her noblest and sublimest representations have been derived. The gospel opened up a world of fact and a world of feeling for displays of artistic genius never known before. Christ Himself, the desired of all nations, in whom the Deity assumed a human form and dwelt among men,—Christ on Calvary, showing forth triumphant majesty in lowliest meekness and sorrow,—presented an order of subjects than which no grander could be conceived, and they have been represented by Rubens, Raphael, and Rembrandt in pictures of unsurpassed loveliness. "The ancient world knew the divine only as the majesty of power, not as the grace of condescension to the depths of human woe. Christianity not only disclosed a new world to art,

but bestowed upon her a new soul." Art has found its highest opportunity for interpreting beauty in life under the light of the incarnation and the cross of Christ, and therefore the gospel claims for Him the ministry of art in every shape and sound, in every form and colour. As Christianity claims the service of art, so art should view it as the regnant power. If it is to have a home in the wide mansion of religion, it must be as a child of the house, and not as wielding or usurping authority. The function of Christianity is to purify and elevate the mission of art.

It is a question of some moment to determine the aim of art. Is it moral or immoral? Is it simply to please? The question of its moral or immoral character is very much a speculative one. Abstractly considered, it cannot be said to depend on the morality of the artist; but viewed practically, all true art is moral, and as one of the natural powers it is to be consecrated by the gospel and charged with the spirit of moral truth. It is the pure soul that makes the true artist; it is the man of reverent mood and severe taste that dignifies the chisel and brush, employing them to execute worthy performances. The healthiest temper of art is undoubtedly moral,

while its function is to minister to the joy and happiness of life. When prosecuted in a spirit of moral goodness, and contemplating moral goodness as its end, we can freely recognise it as one of the chief sources of brightness. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Opposition exists between art which takes pleasure in God's works, and all those forms of religious fanaticism which turn away from earthly loveliness, and condemn pleasure as sinful. But Christianity as well as art bids us rejoice in the sight of all visible beauty, fully and exquisitely, while it inspires art with a feeling of purity, and thus transfigures it. Art is, in its masterpieces, always moral, but in no narrow and conventional sense. The best art is, like Titian's or Shakespeare's, true to the great glad instincts of our nature, severely faithful to its foibles, never morbid or emasculated, many-sided without being unbalanced, and forcible without losing the fine sense of proportion. Art is capable of ministering to selfishness and luxury, and then it becomes that corruption of the best which leads to the worst consequences. It ceases to be true art when it is divorced from religion, and when it takes the place of God in His holiness and grace, instead of lifting reverent gaze to His throne. When its sole aim



is to please, and to excite mere sensuousness, it has begun to degenerate, and will hasten the ruin of the states it has adorned. In the words of John Ruskin: "The names of great painters are like passing bells: in the name of Velasquez, you hear sounded the fall of Spain; in the name of Titian, that of Venice; in the name of Leonardo, that of Milan; in the name of Raphael, that of Rome. And there is profound justice in this; for in proportion to the nobleness of the power is the guilt of its use for purposes vain or vile." If art would fulfil its true mission, and not degrade the nation, it must be duly subordinated to religion and morality, and not yield to the temptation of seeking to be their rival and supplanter. It is capable of exercising moral and immoral functions, but Christianity should so control and direct it as to promote the one and restrain the other. The gospel, with its ideal of the body as a means of revealing the inner life, is the only power that can give to art purity of purpose and passion to touch its work with sacred fire.

It becomes us, as Christians, to sympathise with art. Let us hold it a law of Christian life that our gospel has to do with everything which gladdens and refines man. A statue, a picture, a symphony,

a poem, are among the most intellectual pleasures, and touch our finest emotions. The sense of art-beauty, it seems, has never been one of our national tastes. In his book on the *Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, Professor Veitch remarks that our earlier poets show no appreciation of such buildings as Melrose, Jedburgh, Roslin, and Dunblane, even when they stood in their un-mutilated grace and symmetry, and says, "Perhaps it was that the Scottish mind had then, as now, a difficulty in fusing religious and æsthetic feeling." What our old poets passed by in the fulness of beauty, Sir Walter Scott has pictured in ruin for the imagination of all time,—

"The moon on the east oriel shone,  
Through slender shafts of shapely stone,  
By foliated tracery combined ;  
Thou wouldst have thought some fairy's hand,  
'Twixt poplars straight the osier wand,  
In many a freakish knot, had twined :  
They framed a spell, when the work was done,  
And changed the willow wreath to stone."

Since the time of our old bards, a Puritan element has widened the breach between religious and æsthetic feeling still further, and taught us to believe that the love of beauty in art and worship is hostile to the life of the soul. The absence of æsthetic taste has shown itself for generations in

the prevalence of a general plainness, some would say ugliness, as marking our religious edifices and the worship offered to God there. The genius of Scottish piety has always been opposed to a merely sensuous worship, holding to the intellectual and spiritual elements as far more important than the merely formal and material. Nor is the tradition one to be ashamed of, or one to be hastily renounced. It is weak and foolish to break away from it, and clamour for a more elaborate ritual. At the same time it is not less weak and foolish to identify purity of worship with baldness and baseness of form. We must not suppose that spirituality means rudeness—the severance of all beauty and artistic feeling from the worship of God. A morbid dread of what is chaste and refined in the services of the sanctuary is no true sign of a church's prosperity; there should be infused into them that solemn and chastened beauty which is congenial not only to good taste, but to spiritual thought and feeling. In an age of intellectual and artistic culture like the present, it is as natural to employ the aids of music and art in our worship as it is to write correctly or talk good grammar. Our churches should be in a general way as artistic as possible. An art-feeling

should invest them on every side. Architectural symmetry, with a touch of the witchery of colour in painted window, all producing a sense of harmonious beauty, should hang about them like an atmosphere, and music should add its choicest treasures to that offering of praise which glorifieth God.

It is necessary, again, to recognise *the connection between industry and art.*

In some countries it appears as if nothing could be useful that was beautiful, and nothing beautiful that was useful. Not so in Greece or in Italy. When art was great in those lands, the artist was a craftsman, and the craftsman was an artist; there was no distinction between them. Utility and beauty clasped hands, and kissed each other. The æsthetic instinct was universal, and lay at the root of their life, so that whatever left their hands bore its stamp. This art-feeling was, in Italy especially, the mark of no particular class. It was common to all, high and low; and the desire was not alone for the adornment of churches and public places, but on the meanest articles of domestic use, cups and platters, door-panels and chimneypieces, a wealth of artistic invention was lavished by innumerable craftsmen, who were endowed with rare taste. Amongst ourselves no such apprecia-

tion of art has ever been manifested, nor was any adequate sense of its vital importance felt till after the International Exhibition of 1851, when we began to discover that in some departments our commercial supremacy was seriously threatened by the artistic superiority of our continental rivals. This brought home to our minds the necessity of giving more attention to art as an object of economic value, and since then striking developments have taken place in what were once the most art-forsaken centres of modern industry, such as Manchester and Glasgow. Art should not only be applied to industry, but should be incorporated with our national and municipal life. The walls of our edifices, instead of being blank and silent, ought to be invested with forms that appeal to men's deep and solemn feelings. There are whole streets in which a tasteless age has been gorgonised into stone, and the ugliest features of these are still reproduced in the form of the modern jerry-builder; but the day is coming when our public buildings and thoroughfares will be adorned and made delightful with things beautiful to see, and eloquent of whatever great deeds or good works have enriched and honoured the annals of the places of our birth.

Still further, *a love of art should adorn our homes.*

Ruskin says that the pomp and grace of Italy cannot be ours, but we may have the loftier privilege of bringing the power and charm of art within the reach of all, especially of the humble and the poor. Beauty and elegance need not be the exclusive possessions of the rich. Skill and science have brought works of art within the reach of all. The poor may surround themselves with artistic objects at little expense; they can put a flower in the window, or a picture on the wall. Such things are educative. A good engraving of Rembrandt or Reynolds is so. We want great ideas brought into humble homes, and a picture, that costs a trifle, will represent a noble thought, or heroic deed, or a sweet bit of nature from the fields. Turner's pictures may hang in any house. Cruikshanks may preach temperance, and Ary Scheffer purity and piety. Raphael's Madonna may be had for twopence, and of it some one says, "It looks as if a bit of heaven were in the room."

About twelve years ago a band of art-workers met in Glasgow to form what has been called "The Kyrle Society for bringing home beauty to the poor," and it seeks to decorate, by wall-paintings, pictures, and so forth, workmen's clubs, mission



halls, and hospitals; and to give, by a voluntary choir, oratorios and concerts to the poor. Lately another scheme has been affiliated with the Kyrle Society, and has the hearty approval of the Institute of Fine Arts, the Ruskin Society, the Social Union, and kindred societies, whose aim is to foster art as a vital element in the well-being of the city. A set of panels has been painted for the hall of the Prisoners Aid Society in Duke Street, and the artists of Glasgow have contributed the entire work. Here is a field for our young people of taste and talent, to put forth such skill as God has given them, and carry a little sunshine into the lives of the poor.

Finally, *the highest art is the art of life.*

Milton says that the best poet is he who makes his own life a poem. Just so. The end of all art is to make life full and harmonious. A beautiful form is better than a beautiful face, and a beautiful behaviour is better than a beautiful form; it gives a higher pleasure than statues or pictures, it is the finest of the fine arts. Christianity is here the supreme art, and Christ Himself the Supreme Artist. Browning sings—

“God is the perfect poet,  
And in creation acts His own conceptions;”

and an apostle writes, "We are God's workmanship"—God's poem, it is in the original—"created in"—or by—"Christ Jesus unto good works." Each life has its own chord, which it has to complete. Thoughts, words, and actions should make one perfect whole. As childhood passes away, the need and the beauty of harmonious life increase. As manhood awakes to life's meaning, some harmony of purpose is felt to be of vital importance. We seek the grown-up taste of order, balance, and proportion. Each action becomes significant as a note which goes to make up the music of the whole. We learn to harmonise with our surroundings. A fuller growth takes place when we are drawn away to live with nature, and when intercourse with Him who hides behind her beauty, restores in us the harmony that human conflict has done so much to disturb. It is possible to make our lives so harmonious with our circumstances, so fair and perfect, that the beauty of the Lord our God comes upon us, and the art of life is complete. This is the highest product to which we can aspire. The artist of humanity! To realise its ideal, and fulfil it in a real likeness of character to the goodness of Jesus Christ, what higher art than this can we know? What need of the painter's brush and canvas,

if we know how to paint in true feeling, and breathe joyous life? What need of poet's pen and paper, if our poems speak the truth of holy living? What need of musician's instrument and orchestra, if all that is within us rises to the power and beauty of adoring harmony? Such a life is infinitely more beautiful and worthy than the greatest works of the great masters. Let us learn the first and last lesson which a study of the fine arts teaches—"to make everything beautiful that we do; above all, our own characters and lives."

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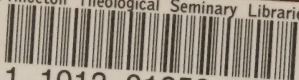








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